CRISTIANE DE OLIVEIRA BUSATO

John Fowles's The Magus as a Postmodern Romance

Dissertação apresentada ao Curso de Pós-Graduação em Literaturas de Língua Inglesa, do Setor de Ciências Humanas, Letras e Artes da Universidade Federal do Paraná, para a obtenção do grau de Mestre em Letras.

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Defesa de dissertação da Mestranda CRISTIANE DE OLIVEIRA BUSATO para obtenção do título de **Mestre em Letras.**

Os abaixo assinados Brunilda Tempel Reichmann, Anna Stegh Camati e Regina M. Przybycien, argüiram, nesta data, a candidata, a qual apresentou a dissertação:

"JOHN FOWLES' THE MAGUS AS A POSTMODERN ROMANCE".

Procedida a argüição segundo o protocolo aprovado pelo Colegiado do Curso, a Banca é de parecer que a candidata está apta ao título de ***Mestre em Letras***, tendo merecido os conceitos abaixo:

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on The Magus, one of Fowles's most experimental creations. Through an analysis of the genre, characters, and narrative perspectives, I have tried to account for the book's complexities and originality.

I have traced a brief historical panorama of romance in literary history, highlighting its main characteristics and relating them to The Magus, in order to better place it within the romance trend. Thus, I have dealt with the quest theme and the theme of illusion and reality as central to the book; I have also analyzed character and the narrative perspectives, considering the role of the reader, the narrator and the enigmatic figure of the magus, trying to show how Fowles's conscious manipulations of these themes, characters and devices contribute to the creation of an ingenious and self-reflective postmodern narrative.

Throughout this study, I have attempted to contrast and compare the novel and the romance forms working within The Magus. I have sought to demonstrate that The Magus is neither a

pure novel nor a pure romance; rather, it intermingles the two forms creating a third "genre' which I call "postmodern romance".

In relation to literary theory I have resorted to Thomas Beebee's theory of generic instability, Northrop Frye's study of the romance as genre, Brian McHale's analysis of postmodernism as well as to Gillian Beer's history of the romance genre, as a means to describe, account, and validate a narrative which has been dismissed as 'pretentious and empty' by many critics.

I hope to have shown how John Fowles's The Magus is an important literary experiment which succeeded in recontextualizing and revitalizing the romance form within contemporary fiction.

RESUMO

Essa dissertação examina The Magus, uma das obras mais experimentais de John Fowles. Através de uma análise do gênero, dos personagens, e das perspectives narrativas, tentei dar conta das complexidades e originalidade subjacentes à obra.

Traçando um breve panorama da história do romance medieval, i.e., do "romanesco" na história literária, enfatizo suas características principals e relaciono-as às encontradas no livro, procurando assim situar The Magus no gênero romanesco. Enfoco os temas da "busca" e da ilusão o realidade como centrais ao livro; da mesma maneira, os papéis do leitor, do narrador e da figura enigmática do mago são estudados para demonstrar como as manipulações consciences desses temas, personagens e artifícios contribuem para a construção de uma narrativa original e auto-reflexiva.

Ao longo deste estudo, tentei contrastar e comparar as formas do romance e do romanesco (romance medieval) presentes em The Magus. Também busco demonstrar que The Magus não é um romanesco "puro" tampouco uma ficção romanesca "pura"; ao

contráirio, o livro mistura os dois gêneros, criando um terceiro gênero que chamo de "romance ou romancesco pós-moderno". Com relação à teoria literária, recorro ao estudo sobre a instabilidade dos gêneros de Thomas Beebee, ao estudo do romance medieval (romanesco) como gênero literário de Northrop Frye, a análise do pós-modernismo de Brian McHale e a história do gênero romanesco de Gillian Beer, a fim de descrever, validar e dar conta de uma narrativa que foi criticada como "pretenciosa e vazia" por muitos críticos.

Espero ter conseguido mostrar que The Magus realiza um importante e bem sucedido experiments literário ao recontextualizar e revitalizar a forma do romanesco dentro da ficção contemporânea.

Nota sobre a tradução: A terminologia para o termo em inglês "romance" varia bastante em português; segundo o Professor de Teoria Literária e Literatura Comparada da Universidade de São Paulo, Dr. Lafetá, "romance" corresponde à "romanesco", enquanto o termo em inglês "novel" é traduzido como romance. Deve-se, no entanto, observar que alguns teóricos renomados optam por outra tradução terminológica traduzindo "romance" como novela ou romance medieval.

1. INTRODUCTION

Encheu-se-lhe a fantasia de tudo que achava nos livros, assim de encantamentos, como pendências, batalha, desafios, feridas, requebros, amores, tormentos, e disparates impossíveis, e apresentou-se-lhe de tal modo na imaginação ser verdade tôda aquela miquina de sonhadas invenções quo lia, que para ele não havia história mais certa no mundo.

Miguel de Cervantes's Dom Quixote

The Magus[1] is John FOWLES's first book and was written in the early fifties after his return from the Greek island of Spetsai where he taught English in 1951 and 1952. However, only in 1966 after the publication of his second fictional work, The Collector, did he gain the recognition of the public and the critical milieu and decided to publish The Magus. Fowles admits the autobiographical aspect of the work, and says that the period he spent in Greece was indeed the spark that triggered his imagination to write The Magus.

The Magus is probably John Fowles's fictional work that has aroused the most controversy so far. Few of Fowles's books have been so highly criticized and praised by critics. When it first appeared, it was dismissed as a boring, pretentious and empty thriller; its autobiographical and self-conscious flavor, its length, its thematic excesses, its accumulation of details and incidents and its lack of form were condemned. Fowles himself aided these critiques when he called it "a novel of adolescence, written by a retarded adolescent" in the sense that "...[he] tried to say too much ... like all first novelists,... [he] wanted to say all sorts of things about life and it got too complicated.[2] Among the first critics to review the book, Walter ALLEN[3] considered it a "nasty", "hollow", "pretentious" and "self-indulgent" novel; Allen went so

far as to pinpoint gothic and unreal aspects which would diminish the quality of the work. Bernard BERGONZI[4] also called the book "pretentious" and found its ending "unconvincing", even though he conceded Fowles with originality.

A more radical critic, Thomas CHURCHILL[5] considered all the Bourani episode, which is the core of the book, "nearly a bore". Ian WATT[6] has, likewise, viewed the book negatively; he writes: "was there any deeper commitment than a currently fashionable nastiness behind the mind-blowing manipulations of The Magus?" Roberta RUBESTEIN[7] also takes The Magus much more as "an intellectual puzzle" than a "successful work of fiction" and does not account for the romance elements[8] in the book, interpreting it basically as a realistic novel.

In general terms, then, the negative critique that The Magus has received centered around its unrealistic and fabulous aspects. In other words, the critics above have read The Magus in terms of the conventions of a realistic novel, turning their backs on the very aspects that make the work unique and, to a certain extent, original. As Simon LOVEDAY says:

> Romances are particularly vulnerable to misreading. They demand surrender to the conventions of their world, and appear silly without that consent[9]

A few critics, however, have been able to place the "vacuous" and "frustrating" aspects of The Magus in a more positive light. Basically, what these critics did was to call attention to the romance elements within the book.

For instance, Janet E. LEWIS and Barry N. OLSHEN[10] have placed The Magus in the tradition of the medieval courtly romance. They have raised some important issues in examining Fowles's books - among them, The Magus - as romances, such as the courtly love conventions, the adventures of the heroes, the themes of love and sex, the problems of freedom and the figure of the elusive, unattainable female. However, due to the short length of the essay, the merit of Lewis and Olshen's article has been to raise certain lines of analysis rather than to fully explore them. Simon LOVEDAY[11] also interprets The Magus within the pattern of romance, privileging the love story and the quest narrative as key features of the genre. He organizes its immensely complex and lengthy plot, as well as its changing of setting and direction within the romance structure. Though brief, his analysis is, to my mind, quite adequate and

very well developed; my only disagreement with Loveday is that he applies the romance pattern to all three parts of the book. As I will try to demonstrate below, I believe that the romance pattern is highlighted in part II, while parts I and III still pertain to the domain of the novel.

It is my contention that the critics who have read The Magus as romance have taken for granted that the reader is familiar with the conventions of the genre; thus, they have failed to give the reader a more thorough account of the history and characteristics of the romance. Moreover, to my knowledge, none of these critics have sufficiently dealt with what I am going to call, after Thomas BEEBEE[12], the generic instabilities present in the book. It is clear that The Magus is not an "ordinary" romance: it does not, as Loveday's analysis implies, follow the traditional romance pattern; rather, it parodies it. Neither does it follow the more popular contemporary form that the genre has taken, the Harlequin romances.[13] In re-actualizing the romance genre, Fowles chooses a more complex path and deals with different polarities - at the same time that the work contains elements of romance, one also encounters in it many tinges of the novel and of other literary genres.

These back-and-forth shifts from one genre into another are embodied in different ways: in the structure, in the many voices

originated from different discourses, in the two main geographic settings where the plot takes place - England and Greece - and in the main characters who personify different genres and different modes of perceiving the literary worlds they seem to be enclosed in.

Once established the problematics of the instability of the genres, which shifts mainly between the romance and the novel, another question comes to the surface: how can one account for the fact that Fowles employed such a topsy-turvy universe where these genres, rather than co-existing harmoniously, seemed to contradict each other and offer different perspectives through which the reader could enter the book? The most obvious answer stems from the very argument that The Magus is not a "pure" romance, but has, been parodied, played with, sometimes even sneered at by being confronted with its descendant, the novel - considered a more serious genre because it offers a more "realistic" picture of life. From this starting point, it was a natural direction not to analyze the book as romance only, but as a postmodern romance. The term "postmodern", with the support of Brian McHALE's theory[14], would account more easily for the paradoxes and different worlds encompassed by the book.

Since this thesis will deal with the complexities and instabilities of two genres, i.e., the novel and the romance, I will try, in chapter two, to define genre and to provide an account of its problematics. In addition to that, I will trace a brief history of the romance genre, and by defining and characterizing it, I will compare it to the novel; I will then situate both genres within the context of contemporary writing. I shall end the chapter by briefly examining postmodernism and postmodern romance.

In Chapter Three, key elements inherent to the traditional romance form, which can be identified in The Magus, will be explored, namely the quest theme, the theme of illusion and reality, as well as the narrative perspectives. This set of elements will be dealt with as a means to validate my reading of The Magus as a postmodern romance.

NOTES

[1] FOWLES, J. The Magus A Revised Version. Suffolk: The Chaucer Press, 1977. Subsequent references to this edition will be indicated parenthetically in the text.

[2] Ibid. In the Foreword to The Magus, p.8

[3] ALLEN, Walter. "The Achievement of John Fowles" Encounter n.35 August, 1970 p64, 67.

[4] BERGONZI, Bernard. "Bouillabaisse" New York Review of Books, March, 17th, 1966 p. 75.

[5] CHURCHILL, Thomas. "Waterhouse, Storey and Fowles: Which way out of the room?" Critique 10, No. 3 (1968), 72-87

[6] WATT, Ian. New York Times Book Review April 1966, 29th, P.1

[7] RUBENSTEIN, Roberta. "John Fowles's The Magus", Contemporary Literature XVI, v.3, 328-339.

[8] For a definition and history of the term romance see Chapter Two in this dissertation.

[9] Simon LOVEDAY The Romances of John Fowles, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1985, p. 10.

[10] Janet E. LEWIS and Barry N. OLSHEN "John Fowles and the Medieval Romance Tradition", Modern Fiction Studies, V. 31, No. 1, Spring, 1985, p. 15-29.

[11] LOVEDAY, The Romances of John Fowles. p. 29-47.

[12] BEEBEE, T. The Ideology of Genre: A Comparative Study of Generic Instability: 1994, Penn State Press, Pennsylvania.

[13] For a study which concentrates specifically on the Harlequin Romances, see Tania Modleski, Loving with a Vengeance: Mass - Produced Fantasies for Women. Hamden, Connecticut, Archon, 1982.

[14] McHALE, Brian Postmodernist-- Fiction, London, Methuen, 1987.

2. ROMANCE AS A LITERARY GENRE

... to establish a theatre, a little removed from the highway of ordinary travel, where the creatures of his brain way play their phantasmagoric antics, without exposing them to too close a comparison with the actual events of real lives

Hawthorne

2.1 THE PROBLEMATIC OF GENRE: A THEORETICAL APPROACH

> The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable or poem unlimited.
>
> Shakespeare

In order to analyze The Magus as romance rather than novel, I will briefly discuss why a genre shift such as this helps us to understand the work better. Several theorists have tried to describe and analyze genre, among whom Benedetto Croce in Estetica come Scienza della Expressione e Linguistica Genrale[1], Northrop Frye in Anatomy of Criticism[2], Tvezan Todorov in Les Genres du discours[3] and Thomas Beebee in The Ideology of Genre[4].

In defining genre, Croce speaks of the uniqueness of every literary text; in Croce's view each text, then, would represent a particular genre, different from all other texts. My theoretical standpoint, however, goes in the opposite direction of that of Croce's: instead of isolating the text based on its uniqueness, genre study enables us to classify, describe and thus criticize a text within a particular genre. In a way, and this is my

intention in employing a genre approach to The Magus, to classify Fowles's work as romance rather than novel is to use genre as a tool for illuminating certain aspects of the text which tend to go unnoticed or unaccounted for if one sees the book as a novel.

The first problem that is posed, then, is to define what is genre. According to Prentice Hall Guide to English Literature genre is a "particular group of texts [that] can be seen as parts of a system or representations agreed between writer and reader."[5] However, although a work will highlight the characteristics of its genre, it cannot be simply reduced to the sum of its generic parts. In other words, it is possible to recognize that a text repeats certain features that are indispensable to its genre while maintaining a "relationship of difference from the general rule", which is basically the author's style. For instance, one can distinguish in Hamlet two very important aspects: first, that it is a tragedy - for it conforms to the most important characteristics of that genre; second, that it was written by Shakespeare - owing to the playwright's unique style.

TODOROV goes further and claims that genres are made out of other genres: "A new genre is always the transformation of one or several old genres: by inversion, by displacement, by combination".[6] This clearly

applies to the case of romance and its development into the novel form for it is acknowledged by most theorists - such as Northrop FRYE[7], Giulian BEER[8], and Ian WATT[9] - that the novel is a displacement of romance. Frye explains in his study of romance - The Secular Scripture - that when the novel was established in the eighteenth century, it encountered a reading public that was familiar with the formulas of romance. For FRYE, "it is clear that the novel was a realistic displacement of romance, and had few structural features peculiar to itself".[10]

Thomas BEEBEE also emphasizes the importance of genre in the study of texts. He holds that "the meaning of a literary text can depend on the play between its generic categories".[11] However, for Beebee genres are unstable categories: they merge into one another to the point that it is better to speak of generic instabilities rather than of genres separately. Here Beebee comes closer to Frye, for the latter also points to the several genres, their distinctions and their transformations into one another.

Beebee's discussion of the link between genre and ideology is the central objective of his book. Even though this is not a fundamental aspect of my investigation, I take advantage of this point to indicate the interrelated topic of genre and world vision as discussed by him. Beebee

quotes Schlaffer in order to explain the link between literature and ideology or worldview, acknowledging Benjamin's importance in the discussion of genre:

> Benjamin's decisive contribution to genre theory lies in his thought that genres are condensed world-images. If we understand genres as unified and distinct projections of the world, then the reasons behind Benjamin's use of the controversial concept of "idea" becomes apparent: "idea" identifies the unifying and distinguishing principle by means of which the wholeness and distinctiveness of the world of art is created. Organized by means of ideas, genres are pregnant outlines which contrast with the endlessness and indefinites of the real world.[12]

Another author cited by Beebee that also supports the idea of genre and worldview is Ortega y Gasset, who links the different genres to different historical concepts of man:

> Los generos entendidos como temas esteticos irreductibles entre si, igualmente necessaries y ultimos, son amplias vistas que se toman sobre las vertientes cadinales de Io humano. Cada epoca trae consigo una interpretacion radical del hombre. Mejor

> dicho, no trae consigo sino que cada epoca es ew. Por esto, cada epoca prefiere un determinado género.[13]

According to Ortega Y Gasset's argument, each age embodies a certain "genre" or "genres" as it has a different reading of period and man. Thus, let us briefly speculate about the different world-views of romance and the novel.

In general lines, the views of man that the romance and the novel encompass are very different. To Northrop Frye the romance portrays man as "stylized figures which expand into psychological archetypes, that is, characters not modeled after "real people".[14] Thus, the figures in the romance can be categorized as stock characters such as the hero, the heroine, the villain, the antagonist, the old wise man, etc. They are types, representations of unconscious symbols that transcend a period.

In the novel however, man is portrayed as an individual, wearing his personae, his social masks. He is described in his social context, fulfilling (or not) his everyday duties. An epitome of this type of characterization is Defoe's Moll Flanders. Defoe tells the story of an orphan girl - Moll Flanders - from her early seduction, through her various love affairs and her career of crime, to her transportation to

Virginia in her final prosperity. In sum, Defoe shows her as an isolated individual. She is a "characteristic product of modern individualism in assuming that she owes it to herself to achieve the highest economic and social rewards, and in using every available method to carry out her resolve."[15]

Romance deals with a world of dreams, of ideal love-affairs. It is man portrayed in his original state: in the Garden of Eden. Therefore, the dimension of the world view that romance conveys is at first one of escape. The reader knows that it doesn't correspond to his reality, even though the romance idea can be associated to the reality of man's dreams and the unconscious.

The worldview of the novel, on the other hand, is frequently that of man's so-called reality, that is, the reality that man believes as concrete in his everyday life.

In juxtaposing these two worldviews and types of characters - that of romance and that of the novel - Fowles rethinks the conventions of both genres. The reader is, thus, invited to arbitrate between conflicting worlds encoded in the two genres.

To read The Magus as a postmodern romance, rather than a contemporary novel, thus, enables one to shed some new light on the book's characters, themes and structures. Roland Barthes's image of the text as start; in the sky is an appropriate metaphor for the interpretation I am pursuing:

> Le texte, dans sa masse, est comparable a un ciel, plat et profond a la fois, lisse, sans bord et sans reperes; tel l'augure y decoupant du bout de son baton un rectagle fictif pour y interroger selon certains principes le vol des oiseaus, le commmentateur trace le long du texte des zones lecture, afin d'y observer la migration des sens.[16]

In Barthes's image, the text corresponds to the stars in the sky; the arrangement of the stars, the constellation, is a way of reading/interpreting their arrangement. Thus, to place The Magus as novel or romance is to read its constellations - its images, its characterization, its themes, its structure, and so forth - as belonging to one specific genre.

Therefore, by holding that the analysis of The Magus would profit from a perspective which accounts for both romance and the novel - as

genres are defined not as pure forms but rather as generic instability - I will enter an unstable and forever moving terrain: the interplay between the constellations of the genres of romance and novel.

In The Magus Fowles does more than show that genres are not pure categories: he privileges the characteristics of the novel in the first and third parts and gives romance full rein in the second part which is the densest and longest of the narrative. Thus, he places the two genres "side by side", emphasizing their differences and similarities; therefore, a comparison between fundamental characteristics of the romance and the novel can be established. In his comparison, the reader is exposed to two distinct and anachronistic worldviews. One is that of the novel which can be linked to Realism, the social reality, art as mimetic, man individualized. The other is the universe of the romance, that is, the fantastic, the unconscious, man as a type rather than an individual, art as an escape from reality.

In the following pages I trace a brief history of the genre of romance in order to establish the theoretical background in which to examine The Magus as postmodern romance. In selecting a powerful, mysterious, incantatory work such as The Magus, my fear is one of committing a mistake in attempting to thread the simpler path that

literary criticism offers us to a work which because of its wealth of symbolism, defies definition.

My consolation - and my hope - is, though, to raise one or two questions that might prove useful for the critical reader. Time and time again I have felt the powerful spell of "the magus" and, unavoidably, revealed it in this study. I expect that at least I managed to escape from the luring form of the labyrinth, and that the Ariadne's thread that I suggest is not an attempt to artificially provide an explanation where there might not be one.

2.2 ROMANCE: ITS HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

2.2.1 THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF ROMANCE

There were few novels and romances that my lady would permit to read and those I did, gave me no great pleasure; for either they dealt so much in the *marvelous* and *improbable*, or were so unnaturally *inflaming to the passions*, and so full of *love* and *intrigue*, that most of them seemed calculated to *fire* the *imagination*, rather than to *inform* the *judgment*. Titles and tournaments, breaking of spears in honor of a mistress, engaging with monsters, rambling in search of adventures, making unnatural difficulties, in order to show the knight-errant's prowess in overcoming them is all that is required to constitute the *hero* in such pieces. And what principally distinguishes the character of the *heroine* is, when she is taught to consider her father's house as an enchanted castle, and her lover a hero who is to dissolve the charm and to set at liberty from one confinement, in order to put her into another, and, too probably, a worse: to instruct her how to climb walls, leap precipices, and do twenty other extravagant things, in order to show the mad strength of a passion she ought to be ashamed of, to make parents and guardians pass for tyrants, the voice of reason to be drowned in that of indiscreet love, which exalts the other sex, and debases her own. And what is the instruction that can be gathered from such pieces, for the conduct of common life?

Henry Fielding

In order to analyze The Magus as a postmodern romance, a definition of the term romance becomes essential. The Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary offers a series of definitions of romance: "originally a long narrative in verse of prose ... about the adventures of knights and other chivalric heroes"; "a fictitious tale dealing not so much with everyday life as with extraordinary and often extravagant adventures or mysterious events;" and "a type of novel in which the emphasis is on love, adventure, etc.[17]

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English provides a similar definition of romance: "story or novel of adventure; love story, especially one in which the events are quite unlike real life;"[18]

According to Gillian BEER[19], the origin of the term "romance" dates back to the early Middle Ages. Romance referred to the vernacular languages derived from Latin, rather than to Latin itself which was a learned language. The words *romanz, romancar, romanzo, enromancier, romance* referred to books, or to translations of books, in the vernacular. Later, the meaning expanded to include literature, which was characterized by its emphasis on love, adventure and the great power of the imagination.

Thus, Romance as a literary genre is usually associated with medieval literature. In fact, Medieval Romance prospered for about three hundred years (1200-1500), being the dominant form of fiction until the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, the roots of the genre go as far back as Greek and Latin romances, as well as Christian narratives.

One of the most important characteristics of the romance, as already established in the definitions above, i.e., its lack of verisimilitude, that is, its lack of general resemblance to "truth" or "reality" This characteristic manifests itself in several ways: through an exaggeration of the vices of human nature or an idealization of its virtues; through an enthusiasm for adventures more or less remote from ordinary life; through a passion for the strange, the marvelous, the impossible, or the improbable. Thus, adventure constitutes a recurrent theme in romance literature. In The Magus the lack of verisimilitude, much criticized by the book's earlier interpreters, is overtly present in Part II. For instance, the episode in which Lily appears as Conchis's dead fiancée, dressed as a Victorian girl, or her multiple "appearances" in different places almost at the same time, can only be accounted for if we consider them in the frame of the romance, even though Fowles will later on in the novel try to account "realistically" for these mysterious events. In fact, Fowles displays his passion for the strange and the mysterious

throughout Part 11 constantly bringing the past into the present in episodes such as the re- enactment of World War II, appearances of mythical figures such as Apollo and Astarte, among others.

Another characteristic of the romance is its concern with the theme of sexual love. This love expresses itself in supreme devotion to a fair lady, or in the sentimental worship of a female deity that arises from the cult of the Virgin. In The Magus Fowles parodies this theme through Nicholas's fascination towards Lily who is associated with Astarte, the goddess of mystery, as well as with an innocent Victorian girl.

The structure of romance is often that of a quest narrative, after the tradition of the folktale. The romance frequently centers on the adventures of the questing hero. The pattern is usually as follows:

a) the hero leaves home;

b) the hero undergoes an ordeal;

c) the hero returns home.

In The Magus this quest structure also underlies the book. In Part I, Nicholas leaves England; in Part II, in the Greek island of Phraxos, he undergoes several ordeals and finally in Part In, he returns to England. This point will be further developed in item 3.1.1.

Northrop FRYE in Anatomy of Criticism[20] employs a similar tripartite pattern to characterize the romance but suggests a Greek terminology: *agon* (conflict), *pathos* (death struggle), *anagnorisis* (discovery). Frye deepens his analysis of the romance genre in his narrative study The Secular Scripture,[21] focusing on the initiation undergone by the hero.

The ordeal of the hero, consists in his initiation - an important element of the folktale as well as of the romance. Frye divides the initiation process into two distinct phases, which he calls descent and ascent. The phase of descent involves a great confusion of identity and consequent restriction of activity. A break in consciousness occurs at the beginning of the phase, analogous to falling asleep. This is followed by the descent to a lower world: sometimes a world of cruelty and imprisonment, sometimes an oracular cave. During the descent there is increasing isolation and immobility: charms and spells hold back the protagonist; human beings are turned into beasts or automata; hero and heroine are trapped in labyrinths or prisons. The narrative themes and images of ascent are much the same in reverse, the main conceptions being those of escape, remembrance, or rediscovery of one's real identity; growing freedom; and the breaking of enchantment.

We can also detect these two phases in The Magus. In general lines, the phase of descent starts before Nicholas leaves London - he is confused and haunted by feelings of insecurity. This phase progresses throughout the Phraxos part where he even considers committing suicide. Only after he is exposed to all of Conchis's tricks does the phase of ascent begin as Nicholas first searches for Conchis's and Lily's identities and then his own.

As mentioned earlier, the characters in the romance are not individuals, rather, they represent stock-characters and types which aim at universal re-presentation. This is clear in The Magus, starting from how Fowles named his two main characters. Fowles himself gives us clues to interpret the names; in relation to Nicholas Urfe, he writes: "There is a private pun in the family name I gave him. As a child I could not pronounce *th* except as *f*, and Urfe really stands for Earth..." Conchis, on the other hand, should be pronounced with the "ch" as "sh", thus sounding like "conscious".[22] Thus, Fowles links Nicholas to the earth which stands for the real world, the material reality, while Conchis is linked to the complexity of the human mind.

Another point raised by Frye in relation to the romance is the existence of a god behind the action, who, by expressing his will through

some kind of oracle or prophecy, represents the author himself.[23] In The Magus, Conchis can be viewed as standing for the author or a god-like figure as will be analyzed in Chapter 3.2.3.

The narrative situations presented in the romance tend to invoke the past and the socially remote. The romance therefore borrows not only themes, but also structures, from ancient stories and myths. In this, it frequently resembles the folktale. This is clear in The Magus in that the very setting - Greece - evokes the mythological world. In addition to that, some of the characters dress as figures from a remote time - for instance, Lily de Seitas dressing as a nineteenth-century-lady, employing Victorian language, reciting parts of The Tempest, thus constantly bringing to mind ancient times and stories.

The romance is also characterized by its simplicity of form and frequent lack of consecutiveness. By employing well-known stories and bringing them into the present, the romance aims at entertaining, at drawing the reader into its own self-contained world. This world often contains powerful religious and, supernatural elements. While the novel uses a story to give insight into character, to portray a historical period or to reform society, the romance is the story itself. It feeds on ancient narratives, on folktale, on myth; it frequently borders on the fantastic. In

The Magus, in spite of its apparent complexity and diversity of plot lines, the main narrative thread is basically very simple, following the quest pattern. The supernatural and the fantastic contribute to mask the simplicity of the romance form.

2.2.2 ROMANCE X THE NOVEL: A BRIEF HISTORY

> **...it need hardly he observed that he wishes to claim a certain latitude, both as to its fashion and material, which he would not have felt entitled to assume, had he professed to be writing a Novel. The latter form of composition is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience. The former - while, as a work of art, it must rigidly subject itself to laws, and while it sins unpardonably, so far as it may swerve aside from the truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing or creation.**
>
> **Hawthorne**

Don Quixote epitomizes the threshold between the romance narrative and the novel, re-working and parodying many romance features. The character of Don Quixote, modeled on the character of the knight, arguably stands for the romance genre, while Sancho Panza represents the novel. As Gillian BEER writes:

> Don Quixote is probably the single most influential work in the history of the novel. Cervantes's most telling stroke of genius was to embody in his two main characters, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, the two permanent and universal impulses of fiction. Quixote presents the imagination cut loose from the world of sense and observation, aspiring towards the ideal. (...) Sancho Panza is preoccupied with registering the everyday signs and accepting their authority. (..) They are necessary to each other. They illustrate the interdependence of the impulse to imitate and the impulse to idealize.[24]

According to BEER, Cervantes parodies the romance genre: the idealized world of romance is contaminated by reality; wonder co-exists with disillusionment, the ideal with the real, imagination with empiricism. The character of Don Quixote embodies the essence of romance, a genre sabotaged by the realistic urge of the novel. While the novel's main interest is in portraying and representing the real world, the romance concerns itself with idealized worlds, with projections of wish-fulfillment and entertainment.

The first traits of realism in European literature can be traced back to the so-called Age of Discovery. During this period, there was a clear emphasis on the facticity of written accounts: the role of the eye-witness was of essential importance. This would become clear two centuries later

(1700's) with what most critics consider the first English novelists: Fielding, Defoe and Richardson.

Ian WATT gives an account on the history of the novel in England in The Rise of the Novel[25] where he claims that the novel became a dominant genre due to some social aspects, namely the concept of the personal identity which has its roots in the Renaissance's Humanism and the philosophy of Descartes and Locke. The formers apostolate was that the pursuit of truth is done through the individual while the latter defined personal identity as an identity of consciousness through duration in time; the individual was in touch with his own continuing identity through memory of his past thoughts and actions

According to Watt, the novel distanced itself from the romance in that it sought to narrate marks individual experience, whereas romance would dwell on the realm of the fable and seek to narrate past history. Therefore, the novel rejected universals and replaced them with the individual world, this becomes clear with one of the precursors of the novel, Daniel Defoe, who inaugurates this new trend by ignoring the traditional plots of the time and revealing a concern to individualize the characters and present an account of events which strove to create a sense of verisimilitude.

Thus, the novel brought forward many changes in narrative which revealed the concern to describe man as an individual. On the one hand, there are the "classical" tragedies of the renaissance such as the ones written by Ben Johnson, the University wits and the dramatists in France. For them, the action of the tragedies had to be restricted to twenty-four hours. On the one hand, there is Shakespeare who does not worry about the unity of time as the action in his plays happen in a very abstract continuum.

The novel does not work within the twenty-four-hour-period of the "classical" tragedy, nor does it leave the time undetermined in the abstract continuum of Shakespeare. Instead, since the aim of the novel was to be faithful to the individual's daily experience, a detailed temporal narrative was necessary. In this aspect, Watt mentions Richardson who cared to place the events of his narrative in a temporal scheme with a great wealth of details.

The setting of the novel is also described with more details and more realistically than previous literary genres. Thus, Richardson pays a considerable attention to interiors throughout his novels and though Fielding does not describe the interiors in his narratives, he is careful to name places and the locations.

In relation to the narrator of the novel, it is important to point out the role of the "I" in the narrative. Consider, for example, Defoe's employment of first person narration: "I was born in the year 1632, in the city of York, of a good family...", "I was called Robinson Kreutnaer...".[26] This shift to the "I"-form reveals a desire to involve the reader in a world which he almost believes to be true; the eye-witness and the I-narrator, forms which flourished with the novel, thus, serve as a means to "guarantee" the veracity of the events narrated.

With the rise of the novel and the shift of interest to realistic narrative, the romance became a neglected, often despised, genre. The decline of romance began with the spread of Puritanism in seventeenth-century England, and with the consequent closing of the playhouses and prohibition of all popular amusements and pastimes. By the middle of the eighteenth century, romance was already perceived as an old fashioned genre. The novel, by contrast, was the height of civilization. Writers such as Samuel Johnson exemplified the concern of the time to establish a new kind of writing which would be more appropriate to the exigencies of neoclassical thought:

> The works of fiction with which the present generation seems more particularly

> delighted, are such as exhibit life in its true state, diversified only by accidents that daily happen in the world, and influenced by passions and qualities which are really to be found in conversing with mankind.[27]

The romance, by contrast, was perceived as dangerously misleading: it could seduce the imagination and divert people from their everyday responsibilities. Above all, it threatened the dominance of reason.

If, on the one hand, the eighteenth century apparently condemned the romance through its emphasis on the novel, it also, paradoxically, inherited and maintained certain romance traits. For instance, the gothic novel, by employing elements of the supernatural and the marvelous, and by concentrating on the imagination as the main source of inspiration, was to revive the romance genre and keep it alive in a world where reason alone prevailed. An eighteenth century theorist, Clara REEVE[28], is a precursor in defending the romance genre. She makes a clear distinction between the romance and the novel:

> I will attempt this distinction and I presume if it is property done it will be followed, if not, you are but where you were before. The Romance is a heroic fable,

> which treats of fabulous persons and things. - The Novel is a picture of real life and manners, and of the times in which it is written. The Romance is lofty and elevated language, describes what never happened nor is likely to happen. - The Novel gives a familiar relation of such things, as pass every day before our eyes, such as may happen to our friend, or to ourselves; and the perfection of it, is to represent every scene , in so easy and natural a manner, and to make them appear so probable, as to deceive into a persuasion (at least while we are reading) that all is real, until we are affected by the joys or distresses of the persons in the story, as if they were our own.

In REEVE's book The Progress of Romance through Times Countries and Manners (1785), she decries the eighteenth century's contemptuous attitude towards the romance by researching the origin of the genre, and thus, confers it with literary respectability.

Henry James has also contributed to defend the genre of romance in the preface to The American. James criticizes the simplistic definition of romance that reduces it to adventure, the facing of danger. Claiming that this notion deserves a deeper examination, he recognizes the search for adventure and the facing of danger as the pursuit of life itself. He thus defines the experience of romance as

> the kind of experience with which it deals - experience liberated, so to speak; experience disengaged, disembroiled, disencumbered, exempt from the conditions that we usually know to attach to it ...[29]

He goes on to compare the experience of reading as a balloon where our imagination is tied to and says that the job of the romancer is to cut the rope loose from the balloon and let the reader naturally be entertained.

The nineteenth century inherited the eighteenth century ambivalent relationship towards the romance tradition. On the one hand, the romantic movement revitalized certain romance elements such as the irrational, the dubious, the unreasonable and certain settings such as mountains, the desert, the forests, the island. The romantic period sees mystery in nature and over, values the inner world as a source of enchantment as we do not fully grasp it. Therefore, romantic writers ransacked mythology and legend. Women in romanticism were portrayed as mysterious beings, close to nymphs, spirits, magical creatures,

Writers of this period realized that the romance was not simply unreal or artificial; rather, it expressed repressed emotions that the

imagination sought to release. The dream and the marvelous, characteristic of the romance genre, were foregrounded once more. Authors such as William Blake and Wordsworth exemplify the Romantics' tendency to employ the marvelous and emphasize the power of imagination. Later on, at the end of the century, Lewis Carroll provides another clear example of writers borrowing from the romance tradition by feeding on the imagination to create a topsy-turvy world which was called nonsense.

Realism remained, nonetheless, a powerful counter- movement. Influenced by a greatly expanding middle-class readership, the realist novel dealt with the problems and conflicts of characters with whom the reader, could easily identify. Its goal was to present characters and situations as if they were simply reporting them from life. There was, however, nothing the least bit haphazard about the craft of the realists. Writers such as Émile Zola and Charles Dickens took pains to select events, settings, and dialogue considered representative, and their style, likewise, was carefully calculated.

It was Oscar Wilde who, inaugurating a new kind of criticism with The Decay of Lying[30], helped to revise the postulates of Realism. Wilde holds that since life has no shape while literature does, the latter is not

profiting from its distinctive quality when it tries to imitate life. For him, what is generally considered "realism" does not create things; it can only record them:

> M. Zola sits down to give us a picture of the Second Empire. Who cares for the Second Empire now? It is out of date. Life goes faster than Realism, but Romanticism is always in front of Life.

Thus, Wilde inverts the equation of realism; for him, it is the world of dreams and the marvelous which comes first. This inversion permits one to re-evaluate the potentialities of the romance genre, much overlooked by the realistic tradition of the novel.

It is not until the twentieth century that the conflict between the novel and the romance begins to diminish. Influenced by social changes and developments in psychology, anthropology and science, writers emphasized that the remote, the exotic, the dream, exist within every man. As Gillian BEER explains in relation to the revival of the romance genre in our century:

> The work of Freud and Jung has made them [artists and critics] far more aware of the force of the subconscious. This has liberated elements of experience earlier associated with the romance and allowed the modern novel to thrive on allegory and dream, to invoke what is mythic within our own world.[31]

With this emphasis on the force of the subconscious and the triumph of relativism, twentieth-century novelists challenge the traditional approach to reality. The main implication is that modern man cannot accept absolutes anymore. He must adopt a relativistic vision in which external reality is no more important than his inner world. What counts, finally, is man's inner perception and apprehension of it, as PIRANDELLO has aptly put it:

> All phenomena either are illusory or their reason escapes us inexplicably. Our knowledge of the world and of ourselves refuses to be given the objective value which we usually attempt to attribute to it. Reality is a <u>continuously illusory construction</u>. The obstacles and the limitations we place upon our consciousness are also illusions. They are the conditions of the appearance of our relative individuality. In reality, these limitations do not exist. [my italics][32]

In the twentieth century, the romance genre survives disguised in different forms. The most explicit one is the Harlequin romance which offers the reader an "escape" world and relies on a successful formula of an ideal love and ideal world to cater for its faithful public. (eg. Barbara Cartland's books, magazine romances, Sidney Sheldon's etc.). In the same vein, we have the soap-opera which by relying on a contrived plot also provides ideal worlds with characters that either excel in virtue or in vice. As in the traditional romance form, the ending is invariably a happy one.

Science fiction also contains elements of the romance inviting the reader to forget his own real world and succumb to a different reality located, most frequently, in the future but which nevertheless refers to the present. Science fiction offers the reader alternative worlds, generally bearing nightmarish elements which constitute a hyperbole of the "real" world.

Apart from the Harlequin romances, the soap-operas, best-sellers, and science fiction, we can also trace elements of romance in such authors as James Joyce. For instance, in Ulysses, Joyce explores dreams, desires, memory, and the free flow of consciousness to create a singular

world. BEER sees Ulysses as employing the prolix form of romance narrative as the frame in which psychological realism is set:

> ... Joyce in Ulysses adopts the romance organization as a consciously controlled method of presenting life's ample contingencies. Bloom the wandering Jew or errand knight, or epic Ulysses, travels through Dublin which is his home yet alien to him. He experiences without amazement, though with zest, all the particularity which senses offer him, while at the same time, dream, illusion, wishes and memory create the inner present. Joyce frequently refers to the old Irish romances and sometimes the language converts Bloom momentarily into a traditional, and absurd, heroic figure.[33]

Other important writers such as Thomas Pynchon, Kurt Vonnegut, Saul Bellow and John Fowles exemplify how the romance genre is still thriving in recent literature.

The twentieth century, especially with the advent of modernism and later postmodernism, has re-established, through the re-working of old texts and through the blending of realism and fantasy, the romance elements in fiction.

The above panorama of the romance tradition in literary history suggests that there is a pendulum in the history of fiction, now swinging towards a concern to represent reality, hence traditionally mimetic, now swinging towards a more "loose" tendency which by disregarding the representation of reality ends up by questioning the very reality it "escapes" from. In The Magus, Fowles explores both tendencies, offering the reader the opportunity to confront and delight in the two genres.

2.2.3 THE MAGUS AS POSTMODERN ROMANCE

The romance genre is subversive *par excellence* - it goes beyond verisimilitude and creates an ideal world where imagination and wish fulfillment prevail. It also has the characteristic of being atemporal, that is, it has never disappeared completely from the literary scene; depending on the period, it is either foregrounded or repressed and considered as a lower genre. Fowles in The Magus revitalizes the romance form within a postmodernist framework. Employing sophisticated writing techniques, Fowles recontextualizes the romance and claims its position as a respectable genre. It will be, thus, my concern here to analyze how Fowles works within the postmodern trend to embrace the romance.

To my knowledge, postmodern romance has not been yet fully theorized by critics. However, one of the few theorists who analyses postmodern romance is Diane ELAN in Romancing the Postmodern.[34] By examining the place of romance in contemporary literature, Elan traces the theory of the postmodern romance as a form of feminist writing. Elan explores the relationship between romance and postmodernism through their common refusal of the supremacy of historical time in a literary text. Within the frame of feminist critical

theory, Elan deals with politics and gender theories, placing the figure of woman as central to the understanding of postmodern romance.

Even though I will not pursue this feminist approach in understanding postmodern romance, yet some of Elan's remarks are indeed relevant and illuminating in establishing the relationship between romance and postmodernist writing. For instance, Elan stresses that both "romance" and "postmodernism" re-think history and culture, interrogating realism, temporality and writing. She holds the impossibility of a definition of the term "romance" since it crosses genre, historic and aesthetic boundaries. Romance is, according to Elan, a contradictory term from the start: "each text must in some way redefine what it means by "romance", must in the process of this redefinition create a meaning for the genre of romance to which it addresses itself, at the same time as it loses older, perhaps more established meanings."[35] Thus, as Elan writes, romance "threatens to expose "reality" as constructed referent rather than as a "natural" state of existence to which we all neutrally, textually refer".[36]

In trying to define postmodernism, Elan encounters a similar difficulty for it cannot be described as simple continuity or blatant opposition to modernism. However, like romance, postmodernism also

concerns itself with the question of temporality, as well as with issues involving sequence, causality, effect, originality and derivation. Both romance and postmodernism then, try to re-think history and representation.

Even though Elan has not analyzed The Magus, I believe that by going against realism, by displacing realistic narrative as a privileged form of writing, by playing with consciousness, by working with labyrinthine structures, and by deploying clich6s and conventions, The Magus certainly promotes doubt and questions the validity of "historical" knowledge, fulfilling many of the characteristics of postmodern fiction. Thus, The Magus fits well in Elan's concept of postmodern romance; by juxtaposing the world of the novel and the world of romance, embodied in the settings of England and Greece and in the characters of Nicholas and Conchis, respectively, The Magus questions realism and temporality, foregrounding the conventions of writing and thus, exposing "reality" as an artifact rather than a given "nature". The Magus leads us to re-think different genres and their modes of representing the world.

Fowles's status as a postmodern writer can be further clarified by referring to McHALE's study on postmodernist fiction. In the light of Jakobson's concept of the dominant, McHALE in Postmodernist Fiction

discusses the continuities and discontinuities between modernist and postmodernist fiction. JAKOBSON defined the dominant as

> the focusing component of a work of art: it rules, determines, and transforms the re mining components. It is the dominant which guarantees the integrity of the structures.[36]

McHale interprets Jakobson's concept of the dominant as plural, for it applies to the structure of an individual text, to the synchronic and diachronic organization of the literary system, to verse, to verbal art in general and to cultural history. Thus, in McHale's view, the same text contains different dominants depending on the focus under which to analyze it.

After defining and interpreting the dominant, McHale's task is to determine the dominant in modernism and postmodernism. In analyzing the works of authors such as Samuel Beckett, Robbe-Grillet, Carlos Fuentes, Vladmir Nabocov, Robert Coover and Thomas Pynchon, among others, McHale formulates a nutshell conception of the dominant: modernist fiction is basically concerned with epistemological

questions, while postmodernist fiction is basically concerned with ontological issues.

These two problematics - epistemology and ontology - are interrelated and, to some extent, inseparable. Epistemological issues become, at a certain point, ontological and vice-versa. The process is bi-directional and reversible. In literary discourse, the dominant will depend on which set of questions - epistemological or ontological - is asked first and foregrounded.

According to McHale, the basic questions of modernist fiction, modeled in the logic of the detective story are clearly epistemological:

> What is there to be known? Who knows it? How do they know it, and with what degree of certainty? How is knowledge transmitted from one knower to another, and with what degree of reliability? How does the object of knowledge changes as it passes from knower to knower? What are the limits of the knowable?[37]

These questions can take more refined forms such as the multiplication of perspectives, the center of consciousness, interior-monologues, dislocated chronology, withheld or indirectly-presented

information, and the theme of appearance and reality. In other words, issues revolving around the structuring, accessibility, circulation, reliability and limits of knowledge.

For McHale, the basic questions of postmodernist fiction revolve around the problem of modes of being, that is, they are ontological. This ontology refers to the self, to the world and to the text. Thus, these questions are:

> What is a world? What kinds of world are there, how are they constituted, how do they differ? What happens when different kinds of worlds are placed in confrontation or boundaries between worlds are violated? What is the mode of existence of a text, and what is the mode of existence of the world (or worlds) it projects? How is a projected world constructed?[38]

In the light of McHale's theory, we can trace both the ontological and the epistemological set of questions in The Magus. If we follow the plot from Nicholas's perspective, the story becomes a detective form: Nicholas, as well as the reader, is constantly seeking to unravel the mysteries and tricks played on the island, as if there were some hidden

truth that would redeem and explain the unreasonable world and events of Bourani. For instance, in relation to the identity of Lily, Nicholas faces ambiguity, caught between the possibility of madness and theater: "of not knowing quite what statements applied to - in this case, whether to the assumption that Lily really was a schizophrenic or to the assumption that of course I knew that her "schizophrenia" was simply a new hiding place in the masque" (p. 216).

To find the "truths" under the tricks, Nicholas considers many explanations to the events he is experiencing - he thinks he is in a masque (p. 187, 196); or Lily and June film stars (p. 297-); he is being hypnotized (p. 222); he is dealing with the supernatural; Conchis is a psychiatrist trying to cure Lilly's schizophrenia; he is undergoing a telepathic experience (p. 187 and 193). Later on in the book, he writes letters to double check the identity of the sisters Lilly and June (chapter 48)- and even searches Conchis's house. In short, Nicholas's concern is essentially an epistemological one.

Other epistemological issues such as the theme of appearance and reality, withheld and indirectly presented information, the reliability of the narrator, and the limits of knowledge are also dealt with in The Magus. The modernist issue of what there is to be known, who knows it,

and with what degree of reliability, as the scheme on page 99 suggests. The unfolding of the narrator and the problematic of reliability are foregrounded in this scheme, but are mediated through ontological questions such as what kind of worlds are there? How are they constituted, and how do they differ? Is there a more "real" world than the worlds presented in the text?

On the other hand, if we take the story from Conchis's point of view, the epistemological questions are dismissed on the grounds that what is crucial is to experiment the marvelous universe of the island, with its tricks, nymphs and myths, etc., without the preoccupation of reaching conclusions, as Conchis himself proposes: "Ask no questions" and "Every answer is a form of death"(p. 575). Thus, the epistemological questions raised in The Magus are incorporated in the domain of ontology. Fowles reworks the epistemological questions of modernism, parodying and placing them in the frame of an ontological dominant which address issues such as who we are and what we are doing here. There is a clear passage in which Nicholas himself recognizes the supremacy of ontology over the detective plot which he was surveying:

> I understood; it was his [Conchis's] way of telling me what I had already guessed, that detective work would lead me nowhere - to

> a false grave, to yet another joke, a smile fading into thin air. (p. 507)[39]

Thus, even though Fowles in The Magus plays with both set of questions - epistemological and ontological - the latter is the dominant, to use Jakobson's terminology; in this sense, The Magus constitutes an example of postmodernist writing.

In The Magus Fowles deals with clearly postmodernist issues: he raises the question of identity - the ontology of the self - when he emphasizes the use of masks, when he traces the parallels between Conchis and Nicholas and the differences between Alison and Lily. He also brings to the fore the ontology of the text, by indicating that there is no right interpretation, no trustworthy narrator, no reliable text and also by juxtaposing the universes of the romance and the universe of the novel. In reading The Magus as romance, I also want to suggest that the romance has an ontological dominant by denying the real world and by offering alternative ones. The fact that Fowles also works with the novel in some parts of the book lays bare even further the characteristics of romance. The novel, on the other hand, in trying to describe man and the world realistically suggests that one can come to know (the man and the world), having, in this light, a clear epistemological tone. In placing the

"real" world of a realistic narrative of the novel against the "less real" one of romance, in juxtaposing them, superimposing one on the other, and making them collide and retreat, Fowles questions the very validity of these worlds. In exploring questions such as what happens when different kinds of worlds are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated, and in interrogating the nature of these worlds, Fowles also interrogates the world of the reader.

By highlighting contrasts between England and Greece - England representing "reality", the everyday, the known, and Greece symbolizing the unknown, mystery, the ideal - Fowles ultimately challenges and defies the question of the identity of these worlds: doesn't, in some senses, the world represented by Greece reside in our minds, don't we all search for some "far land" where we can give vent to our fantasies?

Fowles's The Magus as I will try to show below, defies simple interpretations, disrupts the authority of narrator and challenges the competence of the reader. Fowles, ultimately, "takes liberties", as a good postmodernist writer, in a genre - the romance - which itself "takes liberties".

In the following pages, I will attempt to analyze some of the main themes developed in The Magus. Throughout this analysis I will be

concerned with the problematic of the genres of the novel and the romance and show how they converge, collide and retreat in relation to each other.

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[14] FRYE, Anatomy of Criticism, p.304

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[22] FOWLES, in the Foreword to the Revised Version of The Magus, P.9

[23] FRYE, N. The Secular Scripture, P. 33

[24] BEER p.43

[25] WATT, The Rise of the Novel, p. 18-34

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[31] BEER, P. 76

[32] PIRANDELLO, L. The Art of Humor. The Massachusetts Review, 6:515-20, Spring/Summer, 1965, p. 37

[33] BEER The Romance, p. 77

[34] ELAN, D. in Romancing the Postmodern. London: Methuen, 1990

[35] Ibid., p. 16

[36] McHALE, B. Postmodernist Fiction. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1987

[37] Ibid, p. 9

[38] Ibid, p. 10

[39] In the passage quoted, two references are foregrounded: "thin air" referring to The Tempest and a "smile fading" referring to the smile of the Cheshire cat in Alice in Wonderland. In fact, The Magus hosts a wealth of allusions and references to myth and works of art such as Pound's Cantos, Eliot's Four Quartets, Dickens's Great Expectations and Isaios Tatios's The Three Hearts (a modern Greek novel). In addition to that, there is the poetry Nicholas himself writes, the Modighani and the two Bonnards at Bourani; the works of art at the de Deukans chateau, the copy of the ancient statue of Poseidon; the "little epistemological fable" of the prince and the magician; and of course the references to Greek mythology such as the labyrinth and the myth of Circe, among others.

3. THEMES AND NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVES: A READING

A Chinaman of the T'Ang Dynasty - and, by which definition, a philosopher - dreamed that he was a butterfly, and from that moment he was never quite sure that he was not a butterfly dreaming it was a Chinese philosopher

Tom Stoppard

3.1 MAJOR THEMES

3.1.1 THE QUEST THEME

E assim sem a ninguém dar parte da sua intenção, e sem que ninguém o visse, uma manhã antes do dia, que era um dos encalmados de julho, apercebeu-se de todas as suas armas, montou-se no Rocinante, posta a sua celada feita à pressa, embraçou a sua adarga, empunhou a lança, e pela porta furtada de um pátio se lançou ao campo com grandíssimo contentamento e alvoroço, de ver com que felicidade dava princípio ao seu bom desejo.

Cervantes's Dom Quixote

Põe os olhos em quem és, procurando conhecer-te a ti mesmo, que é o conhecimento mais difícil que se pode imaginar.

Cervantes's Dom Quixote

According to most critics, among whom Northrop Frye, the quest is a central characteristic of the romance genre.[1] As mentioned in chapter two, Frye divides the quest Structure into *agon* (the conflict), *pathos* (sufferance) and *anagnorisis* (revelation), a pattern which also appears

in the folktale formula "the hero leaves home, undergoes some adventures and returns home". This structure is present in The Magus, as I will show throughout this chapter, even though the book opens under the guise of a realistic novel.

Basically the *agon* is stated at the very first pages of the book where we are confronted with the main character and narrator, Nicholas, who lays bare the central motif of the book, his discontentment with himself:

> I was born in 1927, the only child of middle class parents, both English, and themselves born in the grotesquely elongated shadow, which they never rose sufficiently above history to leave, of that monstrous dwarf Queen Victoria. I was sent to a public school, I wasted two years doing my national service, I went to Oxford; and there *I began to discover I was not the person I wanted to be.* (p. 15, my italics)

Therefore, from the very beginning, the main character ironically destroys the reader's expectation towards himself as hero: Nicholas becomes a sort of anti-hero in quest for a better Self.[2]

Departing from his existential conflict, Nicholas continues the narrative victimizing himself: "I lacked the parents I needed" (p. 15), "[my parents] had contempt for the sort of life I wanted to lead" (p. 16). Apart from exposing his problems with his parents who are killed on a plane accident during his second year at University, Nicholas describes his education as an Oxford graduate in Literature: there he mistook existentialism for "a certain kind of inconsequential behavior" (p. 17), and cynically "acquired expensive habits and affected manners" (p. 17). He left Oxford "handsomely equipped to fail" (p. 17) with a very small inheritance that his father left.

Thus, this very initial perspective introduces Nicholas's problems: he is not satisfied with the person he is, completely unsure about what or who he wants to become, and confused as to how to effect a change in himself. This is the core of Nicholas's conflict, his *agon* in Frye's terms, which will reverberate every now and again in the story. Comparing the *agon* in the traditional romance to that of Nicholas's in The Magus, we see that while the conflict in the former is usually an external one, for instance a prohibition imposed upon the hero by his antagonist, the conflict in the latter is an internal and psychological one, a typical conflict found in modernist novels.

With this information - Nicholas is not the person he wants to be - the reader suspects that a change might happen to him and that he will probably undergo some kind of initiation or quest, characteristic of the *bildungsroman*.[3] The romance pattern of the quest is, thus, evident when dissatisfied with his life and education, Nicholas resolves to accept a teaching position in Greece:

> I needed a new land, a new race, a new language; and [...] a new mystery (p., 19).

Thus, so far, I have attempted to show that even though the characterization of Nicholas conforms to that of the novel - an anti-hero, unsure and critical of himself -, the romance runs concomitantly in the structure of the book in the form of the quest.

While waiting in London for the school year to start, Nicholas meets an Australian girl, Alison, with whom he ends up having an affair. Similarly to the way Nicholas describes himself, Alison is also described in the modern novelistic tradition: her defects and limits are emphasized. Though Nicholas is attracted to her, he feels she is a little vulgar; he is at the same time bewitched and disgusted by Alison's bluntness and her "un- English" manner (p. 27). Ashamed of her accent,

he justifies to a former Oxford colleague that Alison is "cheaper than central heating" (P. 36):

> when she went out she used to wear a lot of eye shadow, which married with the sulky way she sometimes held her mouth to give her a characteristic bruised look, a look that subtly made one want to bruise her more. Men were always aware of her [...]" (p. 31)

As a parallel to that, Nicholas is bored with England; London to him is "dull" (P. 31) and he claims that: "I loathed the cooking-sleeping-everything in one room, the shared bathroom" (p. 41). Alison and England are thus no rival to Greece; he leaves both behind feeling relief:

> The thing I felt most clearly, when the first corner was turned, was that I had escaped; [...] So on top of the excitement of the voyage into the unknown, the taking wing again, I had an agreeable feeling of emotional triumph. [...] I went towards Victoria [station] as a hungry man goes towards a good dinner after a couple of glasses of Mananzilla. I began to hum, and it was not a brave attempt to hide my grief, but a revoltingly unclouded desire to celebrate my release. (p. 48)

Alison and England stand, at this point of the book, for the world of the novel, the crude and banal "reality" of everyday life which Nicholas is trying to escape. The identification of woman and country is further developed by Nicholas: Greece is also personified as a woman, representing an alternative world to the reality of England and Allison:

> What Alison was not to know - since I hardly realized it myself - was that I had been deceiving her with another woman during the latter part of September. The woman was Greece (p. 35)

Eager for a change, when Nicholas arrives in Greece, it is not surprising that he falls "totally and for ever in love with the Greek landscape" (p. 49), establishing with it a relationship of "passion" (p. 49). In contrast to his homeland, Greece had the qualities of a sensual woman: "sensually provocative" (p. 49), "wild" (p. 49); it becomes a dream-world, a land of romance, where everything is possible.

The structure of the quest is further confirmed when Nicholas decides to undertake his journey; according to its symbolism, a journey means more than going away to another place; it expresses the search for discovery, truth, change and spiritual peace.[4]

The transition from the world of the novel, represented by the sterility of England and the vulgarity of Alison, to the unlimited possibilities and mysteries of Greece is experienced by Nicholas as very painful. When Nicholas arrives in the Greek island of Phraxos, however, the tone of the narrative begins to change gradually. The self-assured and self-centered man becomes hopelessly sad and depressed, envisaging suicide, trying to remember the country and people he left behind, but see that his memories "became absurdly and sometimes terrifyingly Unreal" (p. 56). In a parody[5] of the romantic suicidal hero, Nicholas even tries a hand at poetry unsuccessfully:

> To write poetry and to commit suicide, apparently so contradictory, had really been the same; attempts at escape. (p. 62-63)

The *pathos*, thus, manifests itself in Greece where first Nicholas experiences solitude and emptiness; his body and mind are sick. He contemplates suicide as a means of both putting an end to his meaningless life and of giving it a pattern:

> I was worse off than even Alison was; she hated life, I hated myself. I had created nothing, I belonged to nothingness, to the

> *néant*, and it seemed to me that my own death was the only thing left that I could create. [...] it would validate all my cynicism, it would prove all my solitary selfishness; it would stand, and be remembered, as a final dark victory. (p. 60)

This pattern of suffering is further deepened throughout the book, especially after Nicholas meets the Greek millionaire, Conchis, who, by playing tricks with Nicholas's psyche, impinges still more *pathos* in his life.

The last pages of part one mark the threshold between the conventions of the novel and the conventions of romance. Nicholas expresses this change when he says he feels as if he were a character from the universe of romance, a "medieval king" (p. 40). The now world that opens for him is one where there are only the mysteries of Greece: "But then the mysteries began (p. 63). The insistence on the mysteries indicates that we are entering the world of romance. Even though the mysteries are mentioned at the end of part one, the radical difference between the two worlds - the novel and romance, England and Greece - will be affected slowly, more precisely in the Bourani episode, where Nicholas meets Conchis: "Second meanings hung in the air; ambiguities, unexpectedness (P. 35). This part (chapter 10) is where The Magus

begins its trip into the fantastic, the dream and the mysteriousness, perfect scenario for Conchis's tricks.

At this point, a clear distinction between England and Greece can be established: England stands for the known world, where rules, values and conventions of society are respected: "In England we live in a very muted, calm, domesticated relationship [...] (p. 49)". Greece, on the other hand, stands for the unknown, the "other"; Greece is the place where mystery and wonder prevail:

> [going to Greece] was like a journey into space. I was standing on Mars, knee-deep in thyme, under a sky that seemed never to have known dust or cloud. I looked down at my pale London hands. Even they seemed *changed*, nauseatingly *alien*, things I should long ago have disowned." (p. 49, my italics)

Through his enthusiasm towards Greece and his disgust with England, we can infer that Nicholas pertains to the long tradition in English literature conforming to the idea of the Englishman who needs "the other", that is, a different country (frequently Mediterranean), landscape, language and values to attain some enlightenment.[6] Conchis clearly states the role of Greece as a medium for Nicholas to know

himself: "Greece is like a mirror. It makes you suffer. Then you learn."(p. 99)

The entrance of Nicholas in the Greek universe which represents the world of romance is at the same time dramatic - for it is a big change of interior and exterior landscape - and all- encompassing - for the dream atmosphere surrounds the narrative smoothing the transition. Greece, for the naive Englishman, is both fascinating and puzzling. Nicholas finds it hard to enter the world of Bourani; this, part of the narrative, which indeed constitutes its core, resembles a labyrinth, full of cul-de-sacs where Nicholas, as well as the reader, are always asked to re-formulate and re-think the story.

The first puzzle that Nicholas faces is that of Conchis's identity. On the one hand he associates Conchis with Zeus (p. 80) and god (p. 36). On the other hand, he also denigrates Conchis's image considering the possibility of him being queer (p. 85), a transvestite (p. 90), or mad (p. 86). This ambivalence in relation to Conchis's identity is further corroborated by the general tone of the narrative; Nicholas permeates his description with adjectives and nouns such as charade (p. 80), gnomic (p. 90), mystification (p. 90), psychic (p. 100), sensation (p. 101), ghost (p. 102), spiritualism (p. 102), enchantment (p. 104), reincarnation

(P. 106), other worlds, stars, space, madman (.p. 106), telepathy (p. 106), dream, glass, magic, stage management (p. 105), other kinds of reality (p. 110). The overwhelming number of adjectives and nouns that relates to the universe of the unknown and the fantastic help introducing the reader into the world and atmosphere of romance, where the above terms make sense. Nicholas is preparing the reader to share with him his strange experiences in Bourani, making the transition from the matter-of- fact world of the novel (in the first part) to that of the romance world. At the same time, this universe of the fantastic will also serve to justify the lack of certainties about Bourani and Conchis, exempting Nicholas and Fowles from furnishing the reader with a definite solution to the events narrated.

In part two the narrative threads multiply. If in part one, Nicholas's personal story dominated the narrative, now Fowles presents the reader with multiple events which do not immediately interrelate and do not form a congruent whole. Fowles employs a labyrinthine narrative of interwoven stories, typical of romance construction, which leads the reader to an understanding of reality as multiple, endlessly interpenetrating stories, rather than a procession of banal and sequential happenings.

The idea of the labyrinth also serves to emphasize Nicholas's process of initiation. Aware of his condition as adventurer/quester, Nicholas, feeling lost in the Cretan/Bourani labyrinth, links himself to Theseus and Conchis to the minotaur. Nicholas senses that he is in a labyrinth: "Now I was Theseus in the maze; somewhere in the darkness Ariadne waited and the Minotaur" (p. 201). According to CIRLOT the symbol of the labyrinth can be linked to the process of initiation:[7]

> It is likely that some initiatory temples were labyrinthine in construction for doctrinal reasons. (...) Some are believed to have been conceived to have been conceived with the purpose of luring devils into them so that they might never escape. (...) Nevertheless, (...) some should be interpreted as diagrams of heaven (...). This notion is not opposed to the previous one: it is independent of it and, up to a point, complementary, because the terrestrial maze, as a structure or a pattern, is capable of reproducing the celestial and because both allude to the same basic idea - the loss of the spirit in the process of creation - that is, the "fall" in the neoplatonic sense - and the consequent need to seek out the way through the "Center", back to the spirit.

The association that Cirlot makes of the labyrinth with the process of the initiation helps to elucidate what happens to Nicholas in the

Bourani episodes. Similar to Theseus, Nicholas feels that he has to slay the Minotaur/Conchis in order to save his beloved Ariadne/Lily.

Throughout part two, the plot of The Magus seems to multiply into a series of minor narrative threads: Conchis's narratives starting in chapter 18 with the story of World War I which revolves on his early youth and his desertion (p. 120-131). Another narrative thread is that of the encounter of the young Conchis with the eccentric millionaire de Deukans (p. 175-180) which reflects back on the relationship of Conchis and Nicholas. The similarities of Conchis's story with what Nicholas experiences in Bourani are clear, as we can read in the passage below:

> [...] I was twenty-five - your age, Nicholas, which will perhaps tell you more than anything I can say how unable I was to judge him. It is, I think, the most difficult and irritating age of all. Both to be and to behold. But certain persons reduce one to adolescence, because only experience can understand and assimilate them. In fact de Deukans, by being as he was -certainly not by arguing - raised profound doubts in my philosophy. (p. 179)

A third story is the one about the mad Norwegian in Seidevarre (p.296-309). It would be useless to repeat the plot of all these stories here; what is important is the fact that these several minor stories are

constantly interrupted by Conchis's tricks and masques which function as mirrors to the very narratives Conchis has been telling Nicholas.

For instance, the story of the young Conchis's falling in love with Lily de Seitas is interwoven with the story about Lily/Julie's uncertain identity which goes on throughout the Bourani episode: she is thought to be a woman from the past, a kind of ghost, a schizophrenic, and an actress. This is further complicated by the appearance of Lily's double who ends up by being her twin sister, June.

These narrative threads are superimposed and get so complicated that it becomes impossible to discover the truth behind their blurriness. It is precisely this multiplication of stories, the mirroring of one another, and their unresolvability in one simple all-encompassing plot that has been much criticized by those who analyzed The Magus.

In a way Nicholas reflects the puzzled critic and reader as he, like a good detective, tries unsuccessfully to solve these mysteries. These narrative frames and dizzyingly tricks are intricate and do not supply a single satisfactory answer; Fowles discourages the reader to follow this detective mood as it will lead him nowhere. The best way to account for these multiple incidents is the pattern of the labyrinth as I have shown above.

The pattern of the labyrinth serves to unite the meaningless series of experiences, at the end of which a kind of *anagnorisis* is achieved. By submitting himself to the games Conchis proposes, Nicholas learns that he has been playing a game all his life; that game is called, as he himself names it, "the solitary heart" (p. 21). He plays the unpredictable, cynical and indifferent intellectual who collects women during summer vacation and who is able to get rid of them when school starts just as the Alice's Cheshire cat appears and disappears at will:

> I had my loneliness, which, as every cad knows, is a deadly weapon with women. My technique was to make a show of unpredictability, cynicism and indifference. Then, like a conjuror with his white rabbit, I produce the solitary heart. [...] I contrived most of my affairs in the vacation, away from Oxford, since the new term meant that I could conveniently leave the scene of the crime. There were sometimes a few tedious weeks of letters, but I soon put the solitary heart away, "assumed the responsibility with my total being" and showed the Chesterfieldian mask instead. I became as neat at ending liaisons as at starting them. (p. 21)

At Bourani, the games Nicholas plays serve for moral instruction. Games are Conchis's strategies to make Nicholas see the artificiality and purposelessness of the former games he had been modeling his life on.

Through the contrived experiences of Bourani Conchis "educates" Nicholas, forcing his "pupil" to reformulate his identity and outlook on life.

Conchis's strategy is, thus, paradoxical, in the sense that it is through games that he intends to cure Nicholas, a game-player; in other words, by exposing Nicholas to a paraphernalia of tricks and masks, Conchis forces Nicholas to unmask himself even if the final discovery is that there is no single face behind the mask.

What Nicholas finds at his end of this labyrinth is not so much straight answers as to Conchis's identity, to his magic and to the enigma of the island; nor even an explanation as to why he, Nicholas, was chosen for the experiments; rather, Nicholas learns that every answer is unsatisfactory, probably a lie; moreover, he learns the need to overcome his selfishness and is led to affirm, within an absurd universe, the importance of personal values, of love, of consciousness. He has painful new insights about choice, responsibility, love, lust and freedom. Nicholas ends up by admitting his failure to recognize his love towards Alison, who represents a world that he has so much wanted to deny.

Thus, through all his disappointments in Bourani and by recognizing that the revels are now ended, Nicholas decides to go back to

England, to his country, banal and tedious as it is, and reconstruct his life based on the maturity he gained in a place where he did not belong. In fact, he experiences even more *pathos* in England: he feels estranged, "rootless" (p. 574), "specieless" (p. 574), "defeated" (p.575), an "old man" (p. 575). Nicholas learns that one does not necessarily have to leave home, undergo incredible adventures or meet a Greek goddess in order to be happy.

Although Nicholas's *anagnorisis* is not overtly exposed, Fowles supplies us with clues: Nicholas realizes he has to stop aiming at the alien, the unattainable; he must stop falling in love with fiction, stop acting as an actor within a script: "The final truth came to me, [...] there were no watching eyes. The windows were as blank as they looked. The theatre was empty. It was not a theatre." (p.654)

Nicholas also recognizes that Alison is "a mirror that did not lie; whose interest in [him] was real; whose love was real."(p. 539) and that "...her supreme virtue [was] a constant reality" (p. 539) In addition to that, he can now see that the world that Bourani encompassed does not encompass him. Thus, he goes back to the beginning and tries to reconstruct his life knowing that it will not be an easy task.

Now it is his turn to wait and be patient. He looks for Alison incessantly for three months and a half, and meanwhile tries to discover the truth behind the mysteries which happened in Greece. His curiosity is partially satisfied when he meets Lily/Julie's mother who reveals some of the truth to him. Through her, Nicholas learns that Alison will appear some day. And that, she does, on a very common day, when he least expects it. At that moment, Nicholas lays bare his feelings and, even though he cannot utter the word love, he clearly refers to it as "your word", addressing Alison: "I understand that word now, Alison. Your word. [...] You can't hate someone who's really on his knees. Who'll never be more than half a human being without you." (p. 655).

Though the end is open, Fowles, nevertheless, leaves enough space for the reader to fill his interpretation through the very last lines of the book: "cras amet qui nunquam amavit quique amavit cras amet" (p. 654) which translated into English is: the one who has never loved is going to love now. Thus, we can infer that it is through Nicholas's *pathos* that he reaches some spark of enlightenment. Fowles wants to suggest that in order to obtain wisdom - or at least some kind of *anagnorisis* -, man has to undergo a lot of pain and self-search. Nicholas's *anagnorisis* is to recognize that fantastic and incredible events will not be part of his life,

but rather, he must learn to build and cherish his life on concrete and reliable relationships.

Inasmuch as the reader identifies with Nicholas and shares his point-of view - experiencing vicariously his hesitations, doubts, frustrations - he will also share Nicholas's *anagnorisis* by discovering that in the world of romance, it is impossible to solve all the mysteries, to account for all the possible realities, none of which having any prevalence upon the other, no truth lying behind, no mimesis to the real world. Nicholas's *anagnorisis* includes the sharing of his Bourani experiences, the writing about it. Both Nicholas and the reader must face that the romance world created by Conchis/Fowles is one that defies interpretation, much in the same way that life itself escapes it.

The issue of reality and illusion, thus, becomes one of the main themes of The Magus as I will discuss in the following item.

3.1.2 THE ISSUE OF ILLUSION AND REALITY

"Who are You?" said the Caterpillar. This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation. Alice replied, rather shyly, "I - hardly know, Sir, just at present - at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but think I must have been changed several times since then."
"What do you mean by that?" said the Caterpillar, sternly. "Explain yourself"
"I can't explain myself, I'm afraid, Sir," said Alice, "because I'm not myself you see."

Lewis Carroll

There's no truth beyond magic.

Fowles

The theme of reality and illusion permeates The Magus, and marks our experience as readers of literature. In this chapter, I will survey this theme in terms of characterization metafictionality, setting, intertextuality and the theme of love, trying to explore how the world of The Magus relates to reality.

Nicholas, in Bourani experiences the inversion of reality, that is, the "real" becomes "unreal" and the "unreal" becomes "real". First, he meets a man who wears many different masks: he can be a teacher, a

magician, a therapist, a tyrant. Then, he falls in love with Lily, alias Julie, an actress who plays diverse roles: she is a nineteenth century Victorian girl, a prude twentieth century Cambridge graduate. In fact, Lily/Julie works as the reserve mirror to Alison, Nicholas's Australian girlfriend. Nicholas falls in love with the very things in Lily/Julie that Alison lacks. While Lily is sophisticated, educated and mysterious, Alison is simple and straightforward. Alison, stands for nature and the real world: she wants motherhood, wifehood and at the same time she is portrayed as a "real" girl, that is, with laws and imperfections. Frye points out that frequently the heroine's role in the romance "is primarily concerned with her relation to the man whom she, [...] is determined she shall marry, come hell or high water".[8] Her beauty, in contrast to that of Julie, is aggressive and her manners are down-to-earth, all of which scare Nicholas.

Lily, on the other hand, stands for the world of literature and the romance. She speaks Greek, she is able to understand all the allusions, she recites Shakespeare, she possesses a classical physical beauty. In short, she is the mysterious, too-good-to-be-true heroine of the romance narratives, hiding behind the masks she and Conchis invent.

Lily, then, is one of Fowles's means to parody the romance genre and to discuss the issue of reality and illusion. Through her, Conchis "plays" with Nicholas: Nicholas is led, by Conchis, to think she is mentally disturbed and that she invents stories concerning her life, therefore cannot be trusted. Nicholas struggles hard to make heads or tails of the events that he is going through; he creates his own version of the story to fit his own wishes and tentative explanations. He senses he is in the middle of a farce while trying hard to believe in it. At the same time, he enjoys and conforms to the rules Conchis sets up and even though he cast find the key to open the door to the solution of the puzzle, he is clearly taken to it:

> Now I saw Conchis as a sort of psychiatric novelist sans novel, creating with people, not words; now I saw him as a complicated but still very perverse old man; now as Svengali; now as a genius among practical jokers. But whichever way I saw him I was fascinated... I didn't try to pretend that I was anything else than quite literally bewitched by Bourani. (p. 242)

Nicholas, has thus a certain awareness that he is a character manipulated by his "author", Conchis, who cunningly manages to make him play the roles he stipulates. Conchis, once more, brings to the fore

the image of the author Fowles, as god - Nicholas is a real character in the real novel with words written by Fowles, the real author, the real manipulator.

Therefore, the reader is all the time invited to make associations between the fictional world and the real world of writing. In this sense, we can infer that though Fowles lays bare the metafiction of The French Lieutenant's Woman, in The Magus metafictional devices are implicitly present.

It is relevant here to analyze the term metafiction, resorting to Linda HUTCHEON's definition:

> "Metafiction" as it has now been named, is fiction about fiction - that is, fiction that includes within itself a commentary on its own narrative and/or linguistic identity.[9]

In metafiction, then, the emphasis shifts to the process of composition rather than concentrating on the text itself. As well as that, the role of the reader assumes a different dimension - now the writer does not "spoon-feed" him. On the contrary, reading metafiction is not an easy task: the reader attacked by the self-conscious literary text is led to try to control, to organize and to interpret this text.[10]

Part of Fowles's metafictionality is his reactualization of the old romance form within the context of twentieth century writing; the romance, with its emphasis on the unreal, foregrounds the problem of reality/unreality, a common issue discussed by contemporary writers.

Fowles includes himself in the postmodern trend by inheriting and adapting old forms to create a new synthesis, and thus questions the very reality of the so-called "reality" outside the fictional universe; he employs elements of the fantastic such as enactment of masques, hypnosis, dream-like situations, constant allusions to myth and other written works such as The Tempest as well as references to Conchis wearing different masks. Together with the issue of reality and illusion, Fowles brings to surface the question of freedom and the existence of god, which are main concerns of the existentialists,[11] issues that he has cared to examine in The Aristos,[12] a non-fictional book.

The romance form, then, becomes paradigmatic of the unwritten text that reads between the lines of The Magus: reality is a constructed form related to the person's now, that is, the circumstances define one's need to adapt and in these adaptations one is constantly re-creating new selves. Fowles himself recognizes the unreality of reality by saying:

> If you want to be true to life, start lying about the reality of it. ...One cannot describe reality; only give metaphors that indicate it. All human modes of description (photographic, mathematical and the rest, as well as literary) are metaphorical. Even the most precise scientific description of an object or movement is a tissue of metaphors.[13]

By holding that life can only be described by metaphors, Fowles establishes the means by which he deals with portraying reality. Fowles in The Magus, resorts to Bourani - Conchis's villa - as a metaphor for life. Bourani, a kind of fantasy island where anything is possible, challenges the reality of the world outside and the role of man in society. By emphasizing the fantastic, the masque, the magic, the dream, Bourani seems to suggest that reality lies within our minds, refusing thus to see the outer world as the real one. Furthermore, Bourani seems to indicate that one should first be aware of the unreality of life as well as the ephemerality of pre-conceived concepts in order to understand and embrace life satisfactorily.

Bourani is Conchis's domain,[14] his kingdom where romance characteristics are foregrounded. It is there that everything leading to Nicholas's initiation takes place. Bourani, a Greek word, as Nicholas himself learns, means both "death" and "water", two paradoxical and

complementary ideas, which foreshadow the mythical experience of initiation (*pathos*) and resurrection (*anagnorisis*) which Nicholas will undergo. Bourani, and by extension Greece, function as a "playground" for ontological improvisations, reflecting more an inner landscape than a geographic site. Greece is not only externally different from England but, most important, it is also internally diverse.

Another means through which Fowles explores the question of reality is through the allusion to Shakespeare's The Tempest.[15] Lily/Julie recites parts from Shakespeare's text to Nicholas when he is "pretending" to be asleep:

> Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises, Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not. Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices That, if I then had wak'd after long sleep, Will make me sleep again: and then, in dreaming, The clouds methought would open, and show riches Ready to drop upon me; that, when I wak'd, I cried to dream again" (p. 204)

Lily/Juhe incorporates Caliban's speech in which he welcomes Trinculus and Stephanus to the island, appeasing their fears of the strange sounds they heard. This is Lily/Julie's welcome greeting to Nicholas; she speaks as if, like Caliban, she is the true owner of the island's secrets.

By reciting Shakespeare, Lily/Julie sheds light on the happenings in Bourani, explicating elements of the fantastic and the wish to surrender to the magic of dreams. The final lines of the above extract – "when I wak'd, I cried to dream again" - also foreshadow what is to come to Nicholas: in the same way that Caliban fears waking up in a world ruled by Prospero, Nicholas's waking up from the dream world of romance will be hurtful.

It is pertinent to note that while Lily is reciting the lines from The Tempest, Nicholas is "pretending" to be a-sleep; therefore, the theme of dream/fantasy and awakening/reality is all the more emphatic. Furthermore, Nicholas's "fake sleep" alludes to the fact that he has all the time been wishing to dream and escape, i.e., he wishes to surrender willingly to the revels offered by Conchis in Bourani. Dreaming without sleeping, Nicholas falls in love with the romance-like world of Bourani,

and in a kind of parody of the romance reader, abandons himself totally to this make-believe world.

The fact that Fowles borrows from Shakespeare's The Tempest becomes important for two main reasons. First of all, The Tempest is considered neither a tragedy nor a comedy but inserts itself in the romance genre. This is, thus, another means by which Fowles further privileges romance. In addition to that, not only the plot of The Tempest is similar to that of The Magus but also the themes. Similar to The Magus, in The Tempest there's also an extravagance of accidents for Shakespeare abandons his realistic presentation characteristic of his tragic period. Therefore, the events are extraordinary, Shakespeare adopting a freer use of magic than in any of his other plays. Prospero, like Conchis, is a kind of magus who has lived on exile on a lonely island for many years. He exerts his supernatural powers in order to achieve a reconciliation between himself and his enemies. Following the traditional ending of romance, everything ends well.

Another point where The Tempest intersects with The Magus is the problematization of the "Other". It would be pertinent to briefly analyze this term here. In general terms, the 'other' is anyone who is separate from one's self. The existence of the others is crucial in defining what is

'normal' and in locating one's own place in the world. The term is used extensively in existential philosophy to define the relations between Self and Other in creating self awareness and ideas of identity. For Lacan[16], for instance, the other is fundamentally crucial to the subject because the subject exists in its gaze. Lacan says that 'all desire is the metonym of the desire to be' because the first desire of the subject is the desire to exist in the gaze of the Other. Thus, the concept of the other for Fowles, being an existentialist himself, is mouthed by Nicholas when he says that "Greece is like a mirror, it makes you suffer". Greece leads Nicholas to discover himself through the gaze of Conchis and Greece, both "others" for him.

Both settings, that is, the islands of Phraxos and Prospero's island become outlets for eager imaginations and function as 'the other'. They are settings where magic is possible where you encounter yourself and encompass a different principles of reality. In The Tempest, Prospero manipulates the laws of nature on the island through his magic: he makes Miranda sleep at will, provokes a shipwreck in which nobody dies, creates visions, makes his guests hear strange sounds, provokes hallucinations, but in the end he saves and forgives everybody, re-descovering himself as a forgiving man and a benevolent father. We can infer that Prospero's knowledge and self-awareness is only derived from

books but also from his confrontation with the other: the island and Caliban functioning as "Others".

Conchis, similarly, exerts his power of magician, employing illusions which take the form of paintings, manuscripts, sculptures, plays and masques, to create an alternative world where Nicholas can be easily manipulated, Conchis, in this sense can be seen as the alter-ego of Fowles who makes his magic possible through books, operating with different levels of reality, confronting his different 'others' in his fiction, laying bare the fictionality of the work.

Therefore, the issue of reality is problematized in several different levels in The Magus. Nicholas feels as if he were a character being created in Conchis's novel and if we stretch this idea to the "reality" of the reader, this will lead us again to a universe outside that of the fictional one - Nicholas is right: he is, ultimately, a character not in Conchis's unreal fiction but in Fowles's real fiction.

Another point the book tackles in relation to the real and the unreal concerns the theme of love. Nicholas avoids recognizing his attachment to Alison, perhaps afraid of its very reality. Alison, though lacking the literary and magic quality that Lily has, loves him dearly and isn't afraid of expressing that. She is portrayed as an "ordinary" modern

girl, with defects and problems, who had had many love affairs and who is prone to a certain melancholy which Nicholas tries to escape from perhaps because her own sufferance brings to surface his own.

Lily, on the other hand, is stunningly pretty and being a Cambridge graduate knows as much literature as he does, speaks Greek, etc; he is visibly intrigued and beguiled by her. She plays the game of seduction quite well: she gives Nicholas enough ground for him to approach but, in a kind of parody of old romance, not enough for him to make love to her. With Lily, there's always the hope of a wonderful sexual union which will surpass all the previous numerous real ones that Nicholas had had. With Alison though their sexual relationship had been excellent, his thirst had already been quenched, placing it, thus, in the concrete, the already done, the part of his reality. Nicholas's main flaw is, thus, not to be able to realize that the concrete events of his life are quite rewarding in themselves, and that they can make him feel part of the existing real world. Fascinated by the make believe world of Bourani, he falls in love "falsely" with a "false" lover, and lets himself consciously be deceived by a "false" therapist, therefore, falling into his own trap: the eagerness for the now, for the never-to-be-accomplished, for the romance, for the fiction, for the unreal. In love with the unreal, Nicholas forgets his true

self, his origin and loses touch with his identity which later, rather awkwardly, he tries to recover.

By exploring the issue of reality and illusion in terms of characterization, metafictionality, setting, intertextuality and the theme of love, Fowles shows that illusion and reality are interdependent, two sides of the same coin. In the same way that Nicholas does not possess the key to unlock the mystery of Bourani, neither does the reader unravel the intricacies of The Magus; moreover, neither do we in real life understand the traps that we face daily. The answer that Fowles suggests, if any answer is possible, is that to pose questions about Bourani, about fiction and, by analogy, about life is an unfit approach to pursue. As Conchis says "ask no questions" and enjoy. The world of The Magus with its masks and tricks, offers a mirror to reality: both The Magus and reality have infinite layers with no center, no absolute truth.

3.2 CHARACTERS AND NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVES

3.2.1 THE NARRATOR

Alonso: These are not natural events; they strengthen from strange to stranger. Say, how came you hither?

Shakespeare's The Tempest

The narration of The Magus is done in the first person and has the voice and power of the "I" of autobiographies, since the main narrator, Nicholas, narrates in retrospect his own story. The first-person narration provides the reader, though artificially, with a sense of trust. The power of an eye-witness account – "I did it, I saw it" - endows Nicholas with total authority in relation to the text. David GOLDKNOPF in The Life of the Novel comments in relation to the I-narrator: "the story itself is his, it *belongs* to him"[17] (p.40).

However, it can be argued that as Nicholas fulfills the category of the I-narrator who, by definition, is unreliable and usually abuses his power as narrator, then the events Nicholas narrates are tainted by the act of narrating itself.

One of the ways in which Nicholas may be exercising his control over the narrative is by painting himself as the victim, thus leading the reader to believe him, sympathize and side with him. Therefore, the alert reader must always keep in mind the possibility that all the events narrated are a distorted creation of Nicholas's mind which do not correspond to "reality".

Apart from Nicholas, the main narrator, Fowles also employs Conchis as the narrator of several episodes in Part two. Like Nicholas, Conchis narrates the stories of his life as realistically as possible. However, with Conchis, the unreliability of the "I" narrator becomes evident inasmuch as Conchis himself deconstructs his own narratives, by proposing that their significance may not be literal, but allegorical.

Conchis as narrator, in a first analysis, fits into the realistic tradition of the autobiographical novel. He tells Nicholas stories that are totally believable. Nicholas at first, has no reason whatsoever to doubt these stories. However, no sooner had Nicholas believed in them, Conchis himself lays bare their unreliability. Nicholas then, learns to suspect mirroring the experiences of the reader which will be further discussed in item 3.2.2.

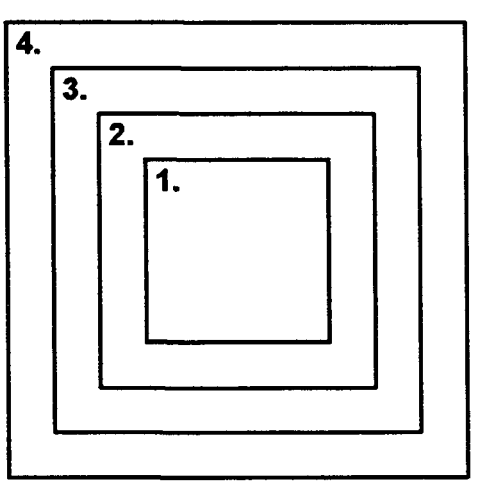
Again, we can infer that Conchis serves as the mouth piece for the author. Through Conchis, Fowles seems to suggest that there is no trustworthy story, no reliable narrator even in the most realistic novel.

To problematize the role of the narrator even further, Fowles employs, at the last chapter of the book, a different voice which has not yet appeared in The Magus, a voice belonging to an omniscient narrator who can be associated to one of Fowles's personae:

> She is silent, she will never speak, never forgive, never reach a hand, never leave *this frozen present tense*. All waits, suspended. Suspend the autumn trees, the autumn sky, anonymous people. A blackbird, poor fool, sings out of season from the willows by the lake. A flight of pigeons over the houses; fragments of freedom, hazard, an anagram made flesh. And somewhere the stinging smell of burning leaves. (P. 656; my italics)

This omniscient narrator, thus, tells the reader, i.e., the "anonymous people", to suspend the waits; the meanings will not be deferred anymore, there will be no answer, the ending of The Magus is an open one, and one should not depend on happy denouèment.

By appearing in his fiction wearing the clothes of an omniscient narrator, Fowles wants to remind the reader once more, as if it hadn't been enough with his previous tips, that the narrative should not be taken for granted - both the power of an eye-witness narrator (Nicholas) and Conchis's narration, whose game of lies and truths defies answers, should be distrusted. The omniscient narrator emphasizes the fictionality of the work and the multiplicity of the roles of narrator, further complicating the narrative process. Through the juggling of the narrators, and by extension, of the writer, Fowles ultimately problematizes the narrative. In a nutshell, the narrative is made more complex in two distinct ways: the passing of the time - as Nicholas tells a story which is already past and as Conchis's tales are also set in a distant and unrecoverable past - and the changing of the narrators, such as the frame scheme below suggests:



1. Conchis tells his life-stories to Nicholas; Conchis as the narrator = author; Nicholas as the narratee = reader (first fictional world)
2. Nicholas re-tells Conchis's story long after Conchis has told him and tells his (Nicholas's) own story years later Nicholas as the narrator = author of his and Conchis's stories The narratee now is the "real" reader (second fictional and "real" world)
3. An intrusive omniscient narrator emerging in the last chapter who may be interpreted as Fowles
4. The author Fowles writing The Magus ("real world")

The scheme above, frames within frames of the narrative - is a *mise-en-abyme*[18] structure, ranging from the real represented by the author Fowles to the least real or the closest to the fictional world, i.e. Conchis. Ultimately, we cannot be sure to trust any of the narrators. Conchis can not be trusted because he is characterized as the magus, a creator and manipulator of realities, which may include not only the events of Bourani but his own life-story. Nicholas himself does not trust Conchis's narrative and clearly says so. Nicholas, in his turn, can not be trusted either because he narrates stories that were narrated to him by Conchis (the deceiver/the fooler/the manipulator) and because he is totally involved in these stories as a character with a limited view point, victim and narrator. Therefore, the reader may suspect the whole

narrative, establishing an ironic distance from Nicholas's telling of the story.

Therefore, we have the unfolding of the narrator having Fowles at the end/start of this hall of mirrors, of this chain and, parallely, the unfolding of the time of the descriptions: twice removed from the time when they "actually" happened.

Through this complex narrative frames, Fowles seems to be supporting Nicholas's statement that "the act of description taints the description" (p. 238). Moreover, Fowles as narrator as well as Nicholas and Conchis fall in the category of the narrator of romance, who, according to Beer makes and re-makes rules of what is possible, and what is impossible;[19] the reader must, then, either surrender and comply with this universe of changing truths or refuse it altogether.

3.2.2 THE READER

> **"it was much pleasanter at home, thought poor Alice, "when one wasn't always growing larger and smaller, and being ordered about by mice and rabbits. I almost wish I hadn't gone down the rabbit-hole - and yet - and yet – it's rather curious, you know, this sort of life. I do wonder what *can* have happened to me! When I used to read fairy tales, I fancied that kind of thing never happened, and now here I am in the middle of one! [...]"**
>
> **Lewis Carroll**

Janice A. RADWAY analyses the process of reading the conventional romance in Reading the Romance.[20] Radway bases her study on results of questionnaires submitted to a group of women which inquired about the reasons why they read romances, the most important ingredients in a romance, what qualities are most appreciated in a hero, etc. The kind of romance that Radway takes into account, however, is the popular romances that center the plot in a never-changing formula of the love relationship between the hero and heroine which always presents a happy ending - a *sine qua non* condition - according to the responses in the questionnaires. What interests us here, though, is Radway's account

of the reason why the women become almost addicted to reading these types of books. The main reason is clearly one of relaxation and escape:

> Women believe romance reading enables them to relieve tensions, to diffuse resentment, and to indulge in a fantasy that provides them with good feelings that seem to endure after they return to their roles as wives and mothers. Romance fiction, as they experience it, is, therefore, *compensatory literature.*[21]

Romance reading, similar to soap-operas, becomes a pleasurable way to a release from the problems of daily life.

The process of reading The Magus is evidently very different from the one described above, for it becomes clear, even to a naive reader that he has to adopt a different approach in reading the book. Fowles invites his reader to be creative in the manner traditionally restricted to the writer. Thus, "the goal of literary work is to make the reader no longer a consumer but a producer of the text".[22] In the first pages of The Magus the reader is confronted with what he may call a regular twentieth century autobiography. He is led to identify with the narrator/protagonist, sharing his experiences and point of view.

However, as soon as the protagonist - Nicholas - meets Conchis, the magus, many strange elements are introduced in the apparently ordinary world of the novel: ghosts, apparitions, psychic experiences, actors and actresses, in sum, the world of the novel is "exploded" and as Nicholas himself indicates, we enter "the domain", where the mysteries begin. At this point, the reader is estranged by this new universe, which he tries to make out unsuccessfully. At each new strange event, the reader, and Nicholas as well, try some kind of plausible and rational interpretation that would bring back that event into the known universe of the novel. As no final and satisfying way of interpreting the events is possible, the reader constantly falls into traps and more traps, deceived by an excess of interpretations which ends up by not accounting for the experiences.

Nicholas, the main character, mirrors the reader, feeling at the same time lost and wary of Conchies manipulations. However, because of his literary background - he is an Oxford graduate in literature - Nicholas is capable of interpreting Conchis's tricks. On the one hand, Nicholas associates Conchis to a difficult and irritating poem. On the other hand, he is equally irritated by Alison's "inability to hide behind metaphor" and is *ennuyé* with her as "uncomplex poetry" normally bored him (p. 266). By recognizing all the allusions and their double-

bearings both to his own life as well as to Conchis's, Nicholas serves as a kind of mediator between the narrative and the reader. Without his aid, the plot of The Magus becomes opaque. Thus, Fowles furnishes the "unprepared" reader with a tool - a point of view - which helps to unfold the narrative.

How far can we trust the narrative, then, the critical reader constantly asks himself in reading The Magus? A constant, irritating and many times annoying suspicion that the reader is being fooled, accompanies him throughout the book leading to an awareness of the very process of writing itself, that is, the fictionality of the work. In this sense, The Magus in its opacity becomes metafictional.

The reader of The Magus is asked not to surrender; much the contrary, he is invited to question, to doubt, and suspect all the time; moreover, he is invited to share this world of imagination without trying to tag it down.

One means by which the reader's power of imagination can be instigated is through the allusions to the sphere of art. This is why The Magus is full of references to works of art and mythology. There are several examples of how Nicholas uses the aesthetic and literary references to "interpret" Conchis's tales, to put the pieces of the puzzle

together. Conchis's story functions as a kind of fictional pattern which could shed light upon Nicholas's own life-story.

Through the many parallels Conchis forces Nicholas to draw between his (Conchis's) life-story and Nicholas's experiences in Bourani, he (Conchis) helps to prepare Nicholas for his initiation. Here, the pattern of romance becomes once more evident: Nicholas left England in search of a new self which Conchis will try to unveil.

Conchis himself proves to be a puzzle to Nicholas. Unlike Nicholas or Alison, Conchis's character lives between the realistic conventions of the novel and those of romance. All the four stories of Conchis's life are highly realistic. To create a sense of verisimilitude for his narrative, Conchis even provides documents which "confirm" the veracity of his tales. However, after leading Nicholas and the reader to believe in his stories, Conchis himself deconstructs them in the best style of postmodern narratives. For instance, after narrating his love story with Lily, Conchis's dead fiancée, Lily herself whom Nicholas identifies because of her portrait in the dining room, enters the room dressed in last century style and dines with them.

Therefore, we can infer that Conchis belongs more to the world of the postmodern romance, in the sense that he constructs and

deconstructs "realities", employing magic, masks, fake documents and several elements which are part of the romance tradition. The reader is constantly, to use David Lodge's terminology, short-circuited[23] in the text. Therefore, his role is much more active than in the conventional romances: the fictionality of the text is overtly exposed in this process. The reader reads at the same time the mysterious plot of The Magus and reflects about fiction and fictionality.

If the reader is aided in some moments by Nicholas's literary background, which helps one to recognize many allusions, nevertheless one cannot fully trust Nicholas's power of discrimination. For Nicholas turns out to be an incompetent interpreter of his own life, misinterpreting love, underestimating Alison, and admitting that he cannot unravel Julie as the passage below suggests:

> Everything I had ever thought to understand about woman receded, interwoven flowed into mystery, into distorting shadows and currents, like objects sinking away, away, down through shafted depths of water. (p. 529)

Nicholas's technique of trying to read and thus unfold the labyrinth of part two proves inefficient. He admits choosing the wrong genre - the detective story - to unfold the narrative:

> By searching so fanatically I was making a detective story out of the summer's events, and to view life as a detective story, as something that could be deduced, hunted, and arrested, was no more realistic (let alone poetic) than to view the detective story as the most important literary genre, instead of what it really was, one of the least. (p. 552)

As a general rule, the main character in the detective story, usually the detective and narrator, tries to solve a mystery or murder by uncovering all the evidences and clues which at the end lead him to a solution. Nicholas learns then, through a process of trial and error, that he cannot and will never possess the meaning for the puzzling events he was submitted to, for as he himself recognizes "the maze has no center" (p. 277). Moreover, he realizes that he has been misreading life all the time. If life itself refuses to be read as a simple detective story, the efforts to hunt "the" truth, or "the" solution for its mysteries will prove futile;

therefore, Nicholas must understand that there is no absolute truth in life.

Thus, the reader can infer that epistemology is not the most adequate mode to read The Magus. Learning with the unsucess of Nicholas's experience as interpreter, the reader is led to try another path, to find another way to approach The Magus. In a universe where genres can be misinterpreted, where they intrude upon one another, where the reader always has to reformulate and suspect, ontology seems to be more suitable in the sense that it recognizes the existence of conflicting and often "conflictable" worlds.

Seen from this perspective, The Magus becomes a reading manual in that through the same process of trial and error that Nicholas undergoes, the reader comes to the conclusion that one should not try to know everything even when the meaning seems to be spoon-fed by the author. The reader should always suspect and recognize the fictionality of the author's "generosity". Transporting this idea to the "real" world, we can imply that Fowles seems to convey that we should not try to read or interpret the mysteries that life brings us. As Conchis explains to Nicholas: "mystery has energy. It pours energy into whoever seeks an answer to it. He [man] needs the existence of mysteries. Not their

solution."(p. 155) In the same way, the reader, instead of solving, should surrender to the "mysteries" of literature.

3.2.3 THE MAGUS IN THE MAGUS

Prospero: We are such stuff as Dreams are made on, and our Little life is rounded with Sleep

Shakespeare's The Tempest

The man who wishes to wrest something from destiny must venture into that perilous margin-country where the norms of society count for nothing and the demands and guarantees of the group are no longer valid. He must travel to where the police have no sway... Once in this unpredictable borderland a man may... acquire for himself, from among the immense repertory of unexploited forces which surrounds any well- regulated society, some personal provision of power.

Claude Levi Strauss

Although The Magus has been analyzed from many different perspectives, not much attention has been paid to the analysis of Conchis, the mysterious Greek millionaire. Yet Conchis remains a key character in the book. I will attempt to show how a deeper study of Conchis brings to surface fresh perspectives in the reading of The Magus.

Fowles normally entitles his books in two ways: either with the name of a main or a key character (e.g. Daniel Martin Mantissa, The

French Lieutenant's Woman) or with an illustrative noun. That's the case of The Collector, The Magus, The Aristos, The Ebony Tower. However, in The Collector and The Aristos, it becomes clear after a few chapters, why Fowles chose to supply such titles, for the plots revolve around these same titles. In The Magus, on the other hand, it is more difficult to understand why the author opted for this particular title. Shouldn't Nicholas have merited the title since he is the main character? Maybe, if we probe deeper into the complexities of the character of Conchis, we will come to an understanding of the reasons why Fowles privileges Conchis[24], the magus, rather than Nicholas, in the title of his book.

Conchis, an extremely rich and accomplished man of about sixty, is a musician, scholar, businessman, physician, and art collector. He establishes himself as a puzzling character from the beginning. It seems to be quite impossible to define him. To pin him down to one meaning would be to annul his power, and to destroy the multiformity that he apparently embodies. Therefore, a brief inquiry of the figure of the magus supported by another similar anthropological figure, the trickster, seems to be most appropriate to amount for Conchis ambivalence.

Let's first reflect on the figure of the magus and try to understand why it sheds some light on the obscure character of Conchis. The magus

is the first enigma in the Tarot pack and according to CIRLOT,[25] is depicted in the form of a minstrel whose symbol is original activity and the creative power of Man. (p.210)

Pursuing the rich symbolism of the magus, CHEVALIER and GHEERBRANT,[26] explain that through the power of his gestures and word, the magus is a creator of an illusionary world. Everything from his being highlights a division of a figure made up equally by two contrary principles. The magus is generally a consultant and can indicate, paradoxically, willpower, personal skill and initiative, as much as lie and deceit, symbolizing ambivalence, the high and the low. It however, in the psychological level, the magus is associated to fortune-telling or a sort of counselor/adviser, in the spiritual level he manifests the mystery of the Unity, symbolizing at the same time the three worlds - God, by the sign of the Infinite, man and the multiplicity of the Universe.

By analogy to the magus, and to further enrich it, it is appropriate here to investigate the anthropological trickster. The main characteristic of the trickster is his ambivalence, his talent as a mediator. According to Levi-Strauss, the trickster occupies an intermediary position between two polar terms. Therefore, he must retain something of that duality: "namely an ambiguous and equivocal character".[27] If the trickster

embodies both positive and negative poles, if he is both harmful and helpful, it is because he participates in the values of both of the contradictory aspects that he bridges in his own being. In other words, tricksters are foolers and fools. Their foolishness varies: sometimes it is destructive, sometimes creative, sometimes satiric, sometimes playful; the pattern itself being always a shifting one, with now some, now others of the features present.

Robert PELTON, a Roman Catholic priest, in his book The Trickster in West Africa[28] examines various trickster-figures in the West African tribes of Ahanti, Fon, Yoruba, and Dogon. Pelton seeks to shed some light on this controversial figure by uncovering the trickster's sometimes hidden meaning in these, societies. He explores the different ways in which the trickster links animality and ritual transformation, culture, sex, and laughter, cosmic process and personal history, divination and social change.

The function of the trickster, who is present in the myths and folktales of nearly every traditional society, is to mediate, as well as to transform, to subvert rules and to poke fun at seriousness; deceiving, he disrupts the very basis of reality. However, the trickster's subversion

synthesizes a new reality. Pelton's commentary on the trickster's transforming power seems relevant here:

> The trickster transform the meaningless into the meaningful, not by becoming saviors, but by remaining ambiguous, facing both ways on every boundary. Indeed, they are transformers just because their passage beyond these boundaries continually provokes intercourse between what is outside man and what is inside him.[29]

It is this "in-betweeness" of the trickster that discloses the many layers of the human mind, and reveals that, to achieve order, there must be some kind of "disorder" or subversion. The rich and paradoxical pattern of the magus supported by the figure of the trickster seems to be particularly appropriate to analyze the ambivalences of Conchis's character, who mediates between the world of romance and the novel, between the "civilized" Europe and the mythological Greece, between consciousness and the unconscious, between reality and illusion. My hypothesis is that Conchis is essentially a postmodern agent who manipulates, like the medieval magus and the anthropological trickster, two genres and two universes. Thus, he becomes at once postmodern

and metafictional. The character of Conchis is basically presented from the third person point-of-view. We learn several different versions of Conchis story: the villagers', the teachers', and Nicholas's. Nicholas learns from the villagers that Conchis had been a collaborationist during the German occupation in Phraxos and had given them shelter in Bourani. Apart from that, he learns that he had been made mayor by the Germans and for this reason, he was hated by the villagers who claim that he had betrayed Greece.

The teachers, on the other hand, contend that most of this story is a lie, that he had indeed been made mayor by the Germans, but that he had in fact done a lot for the villagers and Phraxos.

Nicholas, avid to quench his curiosity in relation to Conchis, decides to go and meet him personally. Nicholas's first impression of Conchis anticipates Conchis's power and primitive intensity. Moreover, it emphasizes the transformation quality of Conchis - the impossibility to tell his age, half man, half simian, the mask- like quality of his face, which is one of the main traits of the trickster as mentioned above:

> He was nearly completely bald, brown as as old leather, short and spare, a man whose age was impossible to tell: perhaps sixty, perhaps seventy... The most striking thing

> about him was the intensity of his eyes; very dark brown, staring, with a simian penetration emphasized by the remarkably clear white eyes; eyes that seemed not quite human. (p. 79)

> ...There was something mask-like, emotion-purged, about his face. Deep furrows ran from beside his nose to the corners of his mouth; they suggested experienced, command, impatience with fools. (p. 79)

Nicholas displays some difficulty in describing Conchis, being completely puzzled by Conchis's already apparent ambiguities. Again and again Conchis is compared to monkeys – "ape-like eyes", "ape-eyes"[30] or other animals – "squirrel-eyes". Nicholas also contradicts himself by saying that Conchis is "slightly mad" and right after that "he wasn't mad after all":

> He was slightly mad, no doubt harmlessly so, but mad. I had an idea he thought I was someone else. He kept his ape-like eyes on me. The silence and the stare were alarming, and faintly comic, as if he was trying to hypnotize a bird. (p. 79)

> Suddenly he gave a curious little rapid shake of the head; as if what had happened between us till then was a joke, a charade that had been rehearsed and gone according to plan, but could now be ended.

> And I was completely off balance again. He wasn't mad after all. He even smiled, and the ape-eyes became almost squirrel-eyes. (p. 79-80)

Both the pair mad/not mad and animal/man serve to emphasize Conchis's ability to metamorphose: now he seems mad, now sane; now serious, even fearful, now joking; "ape-eyes" that change into "squirrel-eyes".

Conchis, in his turn, narrates his own story, supplying a detailed account of some important events in his life. Therefore, we get to know about his childhood, education, love affairs, and so on. In fact, what Conchis does in narrating his story is to offer Nicholas and the reader other tales, other perspectives through which we can build a "character". Conchis's narrative only confuses Nicholas and multiplies the possibilities of what really happened in the past.

Thus, together with Nicholas, the reader learns to develop a skeptical attitude in relation to Conchis. From the beginning we know that he is a mysterious figure that has many facets and will not give himself away so easily. Therefore, because of his mysteriousness, his hidden appearances and disappearances, his proclaimed death, he does not fit in the category of a character from the novel. However, as he is

aware of the world of the novel - the "realistic" demands that Nicholas makes on him - he also cannot pertain to the world of pure romance. He is, thus, an ambiguous character who shifts back and forth the two universes, becoming a postmodern figure - a trickster, a magus, a spokesman for Fowles as a postmodern writer.

Through the aid of the figures of the magus and the trickster, thus, we can view the complexity of Conchis in a different light. To describe Conchis as a character within the universe of the novel has led to incomplete analysis which has left his most striking characteristics unaccounted for. In approximating him to the symbology of the magus and the trickster, we can more thoroughly deal with his ambivalences and polarities - madness and lucidity, jokes and seriousness, good and evil, man and animal, man and god. In short, seen from this light, Conchis incorporates the extremes which constitute the complexity and richness of human kind.

NOTES

[1] FRYE, Anatomy of Criticism, p. 187-190

[2] Most of Fowles's main male characters are anti-heroes who conform to the pattern of human beings full of flaws that attain some enlightenment through a painful relationship with a sort of Jungian's anima, i.e., a strong female character. Examples of these are Charles and Sarah in The French Lieutenant's Woman , Greg and Miranda in The Collector, The Ebony Tower, etc. In relation to The Magus Fowles claims, in the Foreword to the Revised Edition, that he toyed with the idea of making Conchis a woman. For a detailed study of this aspect see Loveday's The Romances of John Fowles.

[3] According to MORNER, K. and RAUSCH, R. in NTC's Dictionary of Literary Terms. Lincolnwood: National Textbook Company, 1975, p. 22, *bildungsroman* translated literally, means "development novel". The dictionary points that "the term *bildungsroman* is applied to a novel that traces the early education of its hero from youth to experience"

[4] See CHEVALIER J. and GHEERBRANT A. Dicionário de Símbolos. Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1991, p.951 and CIRLOT, J. A Dictionary of Symbols. New York: Dorset Press, 199 1, p. 164

[5] I am following the concept of Linda Hutcheon of Parody. According to her, parody means "repetition with difference", "repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity" (p. 6), aiming not at ridicule but at a "bi-textual synthesis" (p.35). She defines parody as "an integrated structural modeling process of revising, replaying, inverting, and trans-contextualizing previous works of art" (p. II), "a form of imitation, but imitation characterized by ironic inversions" (p. 6). See HUTCHEON, L. A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth Century Art Forms. New York: Methuen, 1985.

[6] Examples of this motif of the Englishman leaving home in search of adventure (which turns out to be a search for his identity) in a Mediterranean country, abound in English Literature. Examples are Forster's A Room with a View Forster's A Passage to India, Durrell's Alexandria Quartet, and others.

[7] See CIRLOT, J. A Dictionary of Symbols New York: Dorset Press, 1991, p. 173-176.

[8] FRYE, The Secular Scripture, p.78.

[9] HUTCHEON, L. in A Theory of Parody: The Teaching of Twentieth-Century Art Forms. New York: Methuen, 1985.

[10] See item 3.2.2 in this dissertation.

[11] Since the core of Fowles's fiction seems to be based on the precepts of existentialism, it becomes pertinent to probe into the term here. Existentialism is a modern school of philosophy which had great influence on European literature since World War II. The doctrines to which the term has been applied are in fact very various, but a number of common themes may be identified. A very important theme is the primacy of the individual, and of individual choice, over systems and concepts which attempt to explain him or her. Another theme is the absurdity of the universe; reality, it is claimed, always evades adequate explanation, and remains radically contingent and disordered. This absurdity causes anxiety, but also makes freedom possible, since our actions also cannot be causally explained or predicted. Neither the behavior nor the nature of others can be understood by observation. Existentialism sees, then, freedom of choice as the most important factor of human existence. In The Magus, the emphasis on freedom can be traced through the growth of the protagonist, Nicholas, who learns to exercise the power of freedom in his life without hurting others.

[12] FOWLES, The Aristos, published in 1964 and revised in 1968, is a collection of thoughts where Fowles emphasizes the importance he attaches to Existentialism. See note 11 above.

[13] Ibid., p. 43.

[14] The motif of the domain, or lost domain, which is some sort of natural sacred refuge, like Bourani in The Magus, is ubiquitous in Fowles's fiction. Examples of it are the Undercliff in The French Lieutenant's Woman; Breasley's villa in Brittany in "The Ebony Tower" and Ferdinand Clegg's secluded house in The Collector, among others. See Loveday's The Romances of John Fowles for a detailed account of this aspect.

[15] SHAKESPEARE, W. The Tempest, London: Penguin, 1987, III. ii. 140-149.

[16] LACAN, J. Ecrits, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1966.

[17] GOLDKNOPF, D. in The Life of the Novel, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1972, p. 40

[18] The term *mise-en-abyme*, coined by French critics, is used to describe the reproduction of the overall theme or plot of a work of literature by one element contained within the work itself a kind of miniaturization of the larger structure, a story within a story. We can also view Bourani as a *mise-en-abyme* of The Magus.

[19] BEER, p. 8.

[20] RADWAY, J. Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature. London: University of North Carolina Press, 1991.

[21] Ibid, P.95

[22] BARTHES, R. S/Z. Oxford: Blackwell, 1990, p.4. The reader's approach in reading a book as The Magus is not a passive one as in the Harlequin romances. On the contrary, in order to unravel the manipulations and the games, the reader, like Nicholas, has to end up by playing the "intellectual game" set out for him. In relation to this aspect see also Barthes essay "The death of the author". For Barthes, the reader is no longer solely a consumer of meaning, or what the author offers or intends in the text, but also a producer of different meanings. Thus the problem of authorial intention becomes illusory since it is undermined by the reader, who possesses the alternative

power of producing multiple and limitless meanings. The reader becomes more important than the author.

[23] LODGE defines the term short-circuit as a device which, by assuming a gap between the text and the world combines facticity and fictionality and exposes the conventions as they are being used. See LODGE, D. The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy and the Typology of Modern Literature. London: Edward Arnold, 1977, p.239-240.

[24] One of the topics that runs through the core of Fowles's fiction is the relation between the *aristoi* and the *hoi poloi*, i.e., the few and the many, The Aristoi, an intellectual elite, being responsible for the changes in the world and the *hoi poloi* being the common man, the ones that follow. Thus we can view Conchis as one example of the *aristoi* in The Magus. See Fowles's The Aristos and Loveday's The Romances of John Fowles for a better understanding of this aspect.

[25] CIRLOT, P. 210

[26] CHEVALIER and GHEERBRANT p. 582-583.

[27] LÉVI-STRAUSS, C. Tristes Tropiques. Translated by John Russel. New York: Atheneum, 1963, p. 233.

[28] PELTON, R. The Trickster in West Africa. A Study of Mythic Irony and Sacred Delight. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.

[29] Ibid., P. 17.

[30] For an analysis of the trickster figure and his similarity to the symbology of monkeys in the mythology of African tribes, see GATES, H. L. The Signifying Monkey A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

4. CONCLUSION

The foregoing will, I hope, excuse me from saying what the story "means". Novels, even much more lucidly conceived and controlled ones than this, are not like crossword puzzles, with one unique set of correct answers behind the clues - an analogy ("Dear Mr. Fowles, Please explain the real significance of ...") I sometimes despair of ever extirpating from the contemporary student mind. If The Magus has any "real significance", it is no more than that of the Rorschach test in psychology. Its meaning is whatever reaction it provokes in the reader, and so far as I am concerned there is no given "right" reaction.

John Fowles

By reading The Magus in the theoretical framework of postmodern romance, I have tried to account for elements which have tended to go unnoticed in the more common approach of the book as novel.

The outlines of the term romance are nebulous in the extreme for a romance may display so many different qualities that a definition is almost impossible. No romance shows every one of the characteristics of the genre and many narratives which are not primarily romances may have some of them; in other words, tinges of romance are just about everywhere. Departing from this perspective, I have decided to examine The Magus within the frame of the romance genre and within the context of postmodernity.

To my mind, Fowles chose to revive the romance pattern within the context of twentieth century prose, predominantly dominated by the realistic novel, in order to account for the bewildering variety and complexity of the many levels of reality we encounter today; moreover, in doing so he invites from the part of the reader and literary critic a larger imaginative vision which includes allegories and symbols.

Hardly any of the characteristics of The Magus is absolutely peculiar to romance but collectively they give the book a very distinctive flavor. For instance, in terms of structure, the twentieth century novel

would tend to be more close-knit; a postmodern romance, such as The Magus, instead, needs a freer structure, more episodic and where accidents, coincidences, and arbitrary changes of intention resolve the action, much more so than the inexorable working out of a realistic plot.

I have emphasized certain characteristics of the romance genre such as the quest structure, the relationship of the reader, the issue of reality and illusion as metaphors for the worlds of the novel and the romance, the interwoven stories constructed in the form of the labyrinth and the narrator as the maker of rules. Such features found together in The Magus justify my approach of the book as a postmodern romance.

However, the characteristics of the romance present in The Magus have been greatly modified. That is why I had to resort to postmodernism in order to understand how these characteristics appear in contemporary literary texts. This is the main reason why I have placed The Magus not as romance in its traditional sense, for it is clearly not so, but as postmodern.

Concerning theory, I have resorted to the genre theory of romance as opposed to the novel, and, particularly, to the theories on postmodernism and postmodern romance. Departing from the history of

romance, I have tried to establish its main characteristics and to pursue its manifestations in contemporary writing.

As well as that, the interplay between the trends of the novel and of romance have been explored in relation to characterization. In this sense, Nicholas and Alison have been categorized as belonging to the world of the novel, while Conchis and Julie have been placed as belonging to the world of postmodern romance. These categorizations, however, are not fixed, for the characters migrate from one world into another - Nicholas lives in both worlds, Alison participates in the Bourani events, Conchis leaves the domain, Lily is a character outside Bourani. It is precisely the power of the characters to migrate back and forth these different worlds - that of the novel and that of romance - which makes them postmodern.

In part one of The Magus, Nicholas leaves London and Alison behind, and journeys into the world of romance (part two) located in the Greek island of Phraxos. Throughout part two, Nicholas willingly experiences the mysteries, or else, the tricks that Conchis, the magician, imposes upon him. It is Alison (part three), embodying the principle of the novel, that rescues Nicholas frova the labyrinth of the dream-like world of romance. This proves that the romance pattern of *agon*

(conflict), *pathos* (sufferance) and *anagnorisis* (illumination) has been, to a certain extent, fulfilled.

A metafictional reading of The Magus helps to clarify the fact that Fowles is playing with two conventions: the novel and romance and that the result in pattern is that of a postmodern romance.

In a way, Fowles as writer, inserts himself in his own fiction in the character of Conchis. Conchis, because of his ambivalence and his power of being a mediator, proposes realistic stories about his own life only to later deconstruct them. He subverts the verisimilitude in his narratives and turns "realities" into masks, fictions, performances. To account for Conchis's ambivalence and mediating power between the novel and romance traditions, I have proposed a comparison between him and the figures of the magus and the trickster. However, examining in closer detail, almost all of the characters end up by being themselves tricksters, magi, in the sense that each one of them creates illusions, or rather, performs tricks upon the others.

Thus, this shows that in The Magus, reality is always in a process of construction as I have argued in the theme of reality and illusion. In this manner, Conchis reflects themes pertinent to modern man suggesting

that there is no reality more real than others, or no unreality more unreal than others.

The self-consciously manipulations of romance situations testify to the originality and awareness underlying Fowles's exploitation of the genre, conferring a discernible structural continuity onto his novels and showing them to be something more than the simple entertainments which many reviewers and critics initially perceived them to be.

In sum, the polarities that I have dealt with, namely, the world of the romance (fantasy), the world of the novel (with a clear realistic bend); epistemology (the logic of knowledge), ontology (the problematic of being); Greece ("the other" as an outlet for the imagination, where one could assume a different identity and learn to become a better person) and England (the known, the everyday, the banal); the theme of reality and illusion (isn't perhaps, illusion more real than the so-called reality?) are, all part of modern man's complex psyche. Imaginary worlds intermingle, trespass the boundaries of our own personal "realities" and our own personal "illusions", revealing our own inner quests, ontological and epistemological, our inner Englands and imaginary Greeces. After all, aren't we, also characters, magi of the literature (be it romance or novel, it does not matter) we everyday write and re-write? Aren't we all,

in a sense, searching for something else, some searching for the holy grail as in the Middle Age, others seeking to understand the world and their lives? Aren't we all in a constant quest, out of a very dignified love for the very quest?

Quest is the heart of the romance genre as it is in the heart of our lives - an attempt at permanent recovery or discovery. Perhaps the deeper meanings being sought in The Magus are not the answering of questions but rather their setting up, the questioning of the very certainties we base our lives on.

Conchis and Nicholas are also parts of the same person, the magus and the apprentice - the quest to master, the quest to learn. Whether we manage to teach, whether we manage to learn is not as important as the struggle to teach and to learn.

Thus, we can say that Fowles manages to touch our innermost complexities and intricate mental processes in The Magus. After all, if there is one magus in all the magi in The Magus, be it Conchis, Nicholas, the narrator, the author, the reader, Fowles seems to suggest that the most powerful one lies within ourselves. A complex but fascinating figure this trickster of the fiction we everyday create: man.

Fowles's The Magus falls within that mysterious half- defined country created by literature, a country which cannot be limited, only explored - the world of quest and conflict, of eroticism and self search, of chivalric and pastoral adventure which is to this day an open frontier.

Ultimately, my own quest in this thesis has been to entertain the idea that these somewhat ambivalent, though inseparable themes are part of man's individual life and his struggle to get to terms with it. Seeking to be our own magi, but at the same time attempting not to succumb to the "postmodern" tricks we play at ourselves, constructing our "realities" only to later destroy them: we are transformers of lives, magi of our own destinies, ambivalent beings.

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